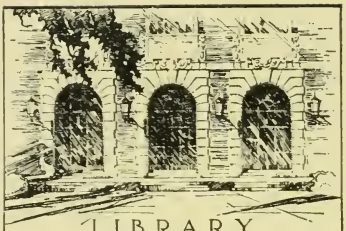

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CARLYON'S YEAR.

CARLYON'S YEAR.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD,"

ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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Reprinted from "ONCE A WEEK."

CARLYON'S YEAR.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE SANDS.

"THAT will do, Stephen, thank you. You may let us out here. A charming scene, is it not, Richard?"

The speaker was a young lady of nineteen; looking, however, not older, but far wiser than her years. A thoughtful face by nature, and besides, one upon which some sorrow and much care for others had set their marks. The hazel eyes, large and tender, were confident, without being bold. The forehead, from which the heavy folds of bright brown

hair were not drawn back, but overflowed it from under her summer hat at their own wild will, was broad and low. The form tall and slender, but shapely; the voice singularly clear and sweet, and whose tones were such as seemed to give assurance of the truth they utter. She was certainly speaking truth now when she said, "A charming scene."

The persons she addressed were seated with her in a cart, in the middle of one of those bays upon our north-western coast, from which the sea retires, with every tide, for many miles, and leaves it a level waste of sand, save for two river-channels, besides several smaller streams, fordable in places, but always running swiftly. Some islands, oases in this desert, dotted here and there at no great distance, yet farther than they seemed, showed grandly with their walls of

rock and crowns of foliage. The shores of the bay itself, miles away at the nearest point, were of a beauty singularly varied, considering their extent. To southward a range of round, green hills sloped down to a white fringe of coast, on which a tolerably large town could be distinctly viewed, with, behind it, a castle on a hill, which marked the site of a much larger town. Upon the spurs of these hills were almost everywhere to be seen a cluster of grey dwellings, and from the valleys thin blue smoke; the district, although somewhat un-come-at-able, was so fair that many came to dwell there, especially in the summer; but yet it was not densely peopled. Eastward, these signs of habitation were more rare, and the hills began to rise in grandeur, till, in the north-east, they culminated to mountains, a knot of which towered in the extreme distance at the head of the bay.

Small coves and inlets indented the northern shore, which was, moreover, thickly wooded; a white village or two, from one of which the cart had just arrived, glimmered through the trees; and to the west a far-stretching promontory, with one beetling cliff, concluded the fair scene,—that is, so far as the land reached. Upon the south was the sea, separated from them by no bar or bound of any sort, and roaring in the distance, as though for prey. It was this which formed the most striking feature in the picture, and indeed, to a stranger to the position,—as was one of the three individuals we are concerned with,—it was almost terrible.

"Well, Agnes," observed Richard Crawford to his cousin, to whom he looked junior by at least twelve months, but was really her senior by that much; "this is truly grand. I could never have imagined what a spectacle

'Over Sands' afforded, if I had not thus seen it with my own eyes. It is certainly the very place for a sketch. Now, jump, and I will catch you."

The young man had leapt lightly from the back of the cart upon the brown, firm sand, and now held out both his arms, that his cousin might alight in safety.

"Thank you, Richard, I am used to help myself out of this sort of difficulty," replied she, smiling; "am I not, Stephen?"

"Yes, miss," returned the driver, respectfully, but in broad north-country accents; "this is not the first time you have been in my cart, nor yet the second. She's as active as any deer in his lordship's park out yonder, that I'll answer for, Mr. Richard. Lor bless you! you don't know Miss Agnes; but then, how should you, you that has been in foreign parts so long!"

Richard Crawford had, it was true enough, been for many years in a far-distant climate, and one which had turned his handsome features to the hue of those of a bronze statue; but he grew a more dusky red than even the eastern suns had made him, when his cousin, touching one of his extended arms with her finger-tips only, lightly leapt upon the sand. She took no notice of his evident annoyance, but exclaimed, gaily, "Now, Stephen, the chair and the camp-stool; then go your ways, and good-luck to your craam. I dare say Mr. Richard here does not know what a 'craam' is; so great is the ignorance that prevails in the tropics. See here, cousin." She drew out from the cart a sort of three-pronged, bent fork, used by cockle-gatherers for getting the little bivalve out of the sand, beneath the surface of which it lies about an inch. "There! that is the true Neptune's

trident. No barren sceptre, but one upon whose magic movement, thus"—she deftly thrust it into the sand, where two small eyelet-holes announced the presence of the fish, and whipped one out—"meat, and drink, and clothing are evoked for many a poor soul in these parts. Why, you need not go far afield, Stephen, since there seem to be cockles here."

"Nay, miss, there's nobbut but one or two here about," returned the man. "The skeer* lies far away out yonder. You'll not be afraid to bide here till I come back and fetch you?"

"Certainly not, Stephen. How many hours shall we have to spare, think you?"

"Well, with this light south wind stirring, perhaps not four, miss. But I shall pick

* The local name for the large beds in which the cockles are found.

you up long before that—just as usual, you know. A deal of company you will have upon Sands this afternoon, I reckon," added the man, as he drove off to the cockle-ground; "you have brought Mr. Richard out on quite a gala day."

The scene upon the wave-deserted bay was indeed growing quite animated; for, in addition to many carts, such as that in which they had come, the owners whereof were all setting to work with their craams, two long strings of horsemen and wheeled conveyances were beginning to cross from either side of the bay, making almost to the place where the two were standing, sketch-books in hand; each band, both from the east and west, were conducted by a guide over the first *eau* or river, after which their course lay plain enough across certain broad, but shallow streams, to the second, near the oppo-

site shore, where the other guide was posted.

"I have seen nothing like this since I crossed the desert," ejaculated the young man, with admiration. "I can almost fancy that those horses are camels, and the trees on yonder island palms, only there are no thieves of Bedouins."

"But in Egypt there is no sea, Richard, like that which seems to hunger yonder for men's lives. Is it not strange to think that all this space now used as a safe road by man and beast will, in an hour or two hence, be landless sea? that not one of those black rocks that stand out so prominently yonder will lift its head above the waves. Folks talk of there being 'no sea to speak of' in these parts, but if they mean that the ocean has here no elements of grandeur and terror they are much mistaken. Its very retreat

and advance so many miles are something wondrous; and when I see the crowds of people crossing thus during its short absence, I always think of the Israelites passing through the Red Sea upon dry land. Nay," added she, as if to herself, and with reverence, "it is only God's arm that keeps the waves from swallowing us up to-day."

"Yes, of course," returned Richard, drily; "yet the tides obey fixed laws, I suppose, and can be calculated upon to within a few minutes; otherwise I should say these good folks, including ourselves, are somewhat foolhardy."

"I have known the tide come in here more than two hours earlier than usual," observed the young girl, gravely. "There was a ship wrecked in yonder bay in consequence; the men having gone ashore and left her, high and dry, and feeling confident of returning in

time. A strong south wind will always bring the sea up quickly."

"There's a south wind to-day, Agnes," laughed her cousin. "I think you must be making experiments upon my courage."

"Nay," returned she, "the breeze is very light. Besides, the guides and the cocklers all know very well what they are about. It is very seldom anyone is lost, and when they are, it is through their own folly, poor folks."

"They get drunk a good deal in these parts, don't they?" said the young man, carelessly, as he sat down on the camp-stool and began to sharpen a pencil, "and being half-seas-over before they start, why it's no wonder if the tide——"

"Hush, Richard, do not jest with death," said the girl, reprovingly. "Men and women have sins to answer for here as in other places;

but I have ever found them an honest and kindly race."

"Well, I only hope in addition to kindliness and honesty your friend Stephen reckons sobriety among his virtues. What! He *is* a little fond of tippling, is he? Phew!" here the young man indulged in a long low whistle, and his black eyes beamed with sly laughter.

"Stephen is weak," replied Agnes Crawford, gravely; "though not so bad, even in his weakness, as some say."

"There, I see it all," cried the young man, clapping his hands so sharply that the half-dozen gulls that strutted on the sands a little way off rose heavily, and wheeled in the blue air, ere alighting at a greater distance; "I see it all quite plainly. My Cousin Agnes, who is so good herself that she can believe evil of nobody, employs this Stephen because no one

else will employ him; she trusts him because everybody says that he is not trustworthy."

"I believe he would risk his life to save mine," rejoined Agnes, simply.

"Of course he would, my dear cousin; for without you he is probably well aware that he could not gain a living. Don't be angry now! I am only delighted to find you are so unchanged; the same credulous, tender-hearted creature that I left when I was almost a boy, who never allowed herself the luxury of going into a tantrum, unless one of her dumb favourites was ill-treated. Now let me tell you a secret—that is, something which is a secret to you, although it is known to everybody else who knows you. My dear Agnes, you are an angel."

"Don't you rumple my wings, then," replied the young girl, coolly, as Mr. Richard Crawford concluded his eulogistic remarks by

patting her on the shoulder. "See! yonder is a drove of cattle about to cross the *eau*. Are they not picturesque? Now, if you were an animal painter instead of being, like myself, only able to draw immovable objects—to shoot at sitting birds, as it were—we might by our joint efforts make a very pretty picture of this scene."

"You make a very charming picture alone, I do assure you," said her cousin, admiringly.

The remark evoked no reply, nor even a touch of colour on the young girl's cheek. Her brow just clouded for a moment, that was all.

"We have secured an excellent position for our sketches," said she, after a pause, and each took their seat.

"Do people ever cross the sands on foot?" inquired Richard, presently, in a constrained voice. He had parted with his somewhat free

and easy manner, and manifestly felt that he had been going too fast or far with his compliments.

"Very rarely," returned she. "There are always some places tolerably deep, as yonder, where, as you see, the water is above the axle-trees of the coach. The poorer sort of cocklers, however, sometimes come out without a cart. Once no less than eight people were lost in that way, and on a perfectly windless day. It happened before we came to live here, but I heard the story from the guide's own lips. A sudden fog came on, and they were all drowned; and yet it was so calm that when the bodies were found at the next tide the men's hats were still upon their heads. A little girl, he said, with her hands folded across her bosom, lay dead beside her dead father, just as though she slept."

"Even if they had had carts, then, the

poor folks could not have been saved," observed Richard.

"Yes, it was thought they might," returned the young girl, sadly. "The guide has a trumpet which carries his words, or at all events the sound of them, to a great distance. It was supposed they were making for the right direction when the waters overtook them, but being encumbered with women and children, and on foot, the party could not hurry on."

"What a repertory of dreadful stories your friend the guide must have, Agnes."

"Yes, indeed," answered she, gravely. "There's one churchyard I know of in our neighbourhood in which have been buried no less than one hundred persons, victims to these treacherous sands."

"And the quick-sands themselves are the graves of many, I suppose?"

"No, never; or, at least, almost never. They are quick-sands in the sense of instability; but they do not suck objects of any considerable size out of sight, or at all events they take some time to do so. The bodies of drowned persons are almost always found."

"Upon my word, Agnes, you make my blood creep. Talking to this guide of yours must be like a business interview with an undertaker."

"Nay, Richard," rejoined the girl, solemnly, "such stories are not all sad. Death has been sometimes met, as it were, with open arms by those who knew it was eternal life. And, besides, there are narratives of hair-breadth escapes from peril sometimes, too, which instance the noblest courage and self-sacrifice. I wish, however, that there was no such road as 'Over Sands.'"

"Nay, then we should never have been

here with our sketch-books," returned the young man, gaily. "See! I have put in the three islands already."

"So I perceive, Richard; and the largest of them in the wrong place. Where are you to sketch in yonder village?"

"Oh! bother the village. The picture is supposed to be executed when the country was not so overbuilt. What are those little trees sticking up above the river? Everything here seems so anomalous that I ought not to be surprised; but nothing grows there surely."

"They are only branches of furze called 'brogs,' which are set up by the guides to mark the fords. It is their business to try the bed of the stream every tide,—for what was fordable yesterday may be quick-sands to-day,—before folks begin to cross. There goes the coach."

"Yes, and how the passengers do stare," returned Richard; "nor indeed is it to be wondered at, if it is their first experience of this road. I think some of them will be glad when they find themselves on *terra firma.* Perhaps you might have seen me arrive rather pale in the face, Agnes, if I had come home this way, instead of by sea, to Whitehaven."

"No, Richard; to do you justice, I think you are afraid of nothing."

"I am afraid of one thing, and that is of you, cousin, or, rather, of your displeasure," said the young man, sinking his voice, and speaking very tenderly.

"If you are, you would not talk such nonsense," rejoined his cousin, quietly.

"Dear Agnes, don't be cruel, don't; nor affect to take for jest what I mean with all my heart and soul. Thousands of miles away on

the wild waves the very likeness of your face has comforted me, which you gave me when we parted, boy and girl, so many years ago. Think, then, what happiness it is to me to gaze upon that face itself, a child's indeed no longer, but with all the innocence and purity of the child beaming from it still. You used to tell me that you loved me then, Agnes."

"And so I tell you now, Richard," returned the girl, changing colour for the first time, as she bent over her drawing, and forced her trembling fingers to do their work. "I love you now, very much indeed, dear cousin."

"Cousin," repeated the young man, slowly, "yes; but I don't mean that, as you well know, Agnes. I only wish you could have seen me in my little dingy cabin, reading your letters by one wretched candle stuck in a ginger-beer bottle—don't laugh, Agnes; I am sure you would not have laughed if you

really could have seen it. I quarrelled with the only one of my companions whom I liked, and knocked him backwards down the companion-ladder because he put his stupid foot upon the desk you gave me. You are laughing again, Agnes. True, I was only a poor lad in the Merchant Service, and poverty is always ridiculous; but I would have shown my love for you in other ways had it been possible. Heaven knows I thought of little else than you!"

"Look here, cousin Richard," said Agnes, rising quickly from her seat and speaking with some severity. "I will not hear this talk; you are well aware what my father thinks of it."

"I cannot help my uncle's not liking me," said the young man, somewhat sullenly.

"Nor can I, Richard, or you know I should make him esteem you as I do myself. But

you are under his roof now; he is your host as well as your uncle—and my father. That is reason good—independent of other very valid ones upon which I do not wish to enter —why you should not address such words to me. I think you should have seen they were distasteful, Richard, without obliging me to tell you so."

The young man did not utter a reply: he only bowed, not stiffly however, and held his hand up once and let it fall again with a certain pathetic dignity that seemed to touch his companion's heart, and indeed did so. Her large eyes swam with tears.

"Forgive me, Richard, I am sorry to have pained you," said she, in soft low tones, inexpressibly tender: "very sorry."

"I am sure you are, cousin." That was all he said; his handsome, clear cut features appeared to have grown thinner within the

last few minutes, as she watched his side face bent down over his sketch-book. They were both silent for a long time, during which they plied their pencils. Draughtsmen know how quickly the hours pass in this way without notice. Presently Richard lifted his eyes from his work, and looked around him. "Agnes," said he, "why does not Stephen fetch us?"

She looked up too, then started to her feet with agitation. "My God!" cried she, "the carts have all gone home."

"Don't be frightened, dearest," said the young man, confidently. "There are two carts still, and Stephen's is one of them. My eyes are good, and I can recognize it plainly, although it is a great way off. He is running the thing very near; that is all."

"Alas! he has forgotten us altogether, Richard. Both those carts are making for the

other side; he could not now cross over to us even if he would. Do you not see how the sea has stretched its arm between us and him?"

Richard Crawford uttered a tremendous imprecation.

"Do not curse him, Richard. They have given him drink, and he knows not what he is doing: or perhaps he concludes that we have gone home by other means, as indeed we might have done. Poor fellow, he will be sorry to-morrow. Curse *me*, rather, my poor cousin; for it is I who have murdered you in having brought you hither."

"No, no!" ejaculated the young man vehemently. "Do not think of that. I swear I would rather die with you like this, than live without you. But is there no hope? Hark! what is that?"

"It is the guide's trumpet; they see our

danger from the land, although they cannot help us."

"Let us hasten, then, in God's name!" exclaimed the young man bitterly; "and if He has ordained it so, let us die as near home as we can."

CHAPTER II.

BY THE WATERS OF DEATH.

THERE was no necessity for the words "let us hasten." Both had left chairs and sketch-books, and were running as swiftly as they could towards the western shore: but the sand, lately so hard and firm, was now growing soft and unstable—the flowing tide already making itself felt beneath it; their progress therefore was not rapid.

"The thought that I have brought you hither, Richard, is more bitter to me than will be these waters of death," said Agnes, earnestly. "You can run where I can scarcely walk; leave me, then, I pray you, and save yourself. Remember, you cannot

save me by delaying, but will only perish also. Why should the sea have two victims instead of one?"

"If the next step would take me to dry land," answered the young man, vehemently, "and you were deep in a quick-sand, lifting your hand in last farewell—like the poor soul you told me of yesterday—I would gladly think that you beckoned to me, and would turn back and join you in your living grave."

She reached her hand out with a loving smile, and he took it in his own, and hand in hand they hastened over the perilous way. Richard, because he knew his cousin and how little likely she was to be alarmed, far less to despair, unless upon sufficient grounds, was aware of their extreme danger; otherwise, a stranger to the place would at present have seen no immediate cause for fear. The sea

was yet a great way off, save for a few inlets and patches which began to make themselves apparent as if by magic; moreover, the shore to which they were hastening had become so near that they could plainly perceive the knot of people gathered round the guide, and hear the words, "Quick, quick," which he never ceased to utter through his trumpet, with the utmost distinctness. It seemed impossible that two persons should be doomed to perish within sight and hearing of so many fellow-creatures, all eager for their safety. And yet both were doomed. Between them and the land lay the larger of the two rivers that emptied themselves into the bay at high water, and ran into the open sea at low. The current was setting in by this time very swiftly, and the swirling turbid waters were broadening and deepening every minute. The banks of this stream, instead of being firm sand,

were now a mass of white and slippery mud, a considerable extent of which lay between the *eau* and the shore; so that it was impossible to carry or even push down a boat upon its treacherous surface to the river's edge. The bank upon which the two unfortunates were standing was not as yet so much dissolved as the other, but they could feel it growing more and more unstable beneath their feet, as they now stood on the brink of the *eau*, not fifty yards from their would-be rescuers. The scene was only less terrible to these than to the doomed pair themselves. Women could be seen among the crowd wringing their hands in agony, and strong men turning their heads away for the pity of so heart-rending a spectacle. Once, either moved by the entreaties of others, or unable to restrain his own feverish desire to be doing something, a horseman spurred his

steed upon the ooze, as though he would have crossed the river to their aid; but the poor animal, well accustomed to the sands, and conscious of danger, at first refused to move, and when compelled, at once began to sink, so that it was with difficulty that either man or horse reached land again.

"Swim, swim," cried the guide, through his trumpet.

"Yes, swim," echoed Agnes. "How selfish it was of me to forget that. It is very difficult, but to a good swimmer like yourself it is not utterly hopeless. Let the tide carry you up yonder, as far as the island, Richard, then strike out for that spit of land; there is firm footing there. Take your coat off, and your shoes; quick, quick!"

The young man looked mechanically in the direction indicated, then smiled sadly, and shook his head.

"We are not going to be parted, Agnes; we are to be together for ever and ever. You believe that I love you now?" added he with grave tenderness.

She did not hear him. Her eyes were fixed on a high-wooded hill, close by the promontory I have mentioned, with the roof of a house showing above the trees. This was her home.

"Poor papa, poor papa!" murmured she; "what will he do now, all alone?" The tears stood in her eyes for the first time since she had been made aware of their danger. Both had now to step back a little, for the bank was crumbling in; the increasing stream gnawed it away in great hunches, which fell into the current, making it yet more turbid than before. There was still a considerable tract of sand, firm to the eye, although in reality quite unstable, lying between them and

the sea; but the latter had now altered its plan of attack. It no longer made its inroads here and there, running slily up into creeks and coves of sand, and holding possession of them until reinforcements came up, but was advancing boldly in one long low line, with just a fringe of foam above it like the sputter of musketry. In addition to the threatening growl noticeable so long, could also now be heard a faint and far-off roar.

"It will soon be over now, Richard," said the young girl, squeezing the hand that still held her own; "that sound is our death knell."

"What is it, Agnes?"

"It is the tidal wave they call the Bore. It may be half an hour away still; it may be but a few minutes. But when it comes it will overwhelm us."

She raised her eyes to the blue sky, which

was smiling upon this scene of despair and death, after nature's cruel fashion, and her lips, which had not lost their colour, moved in silent prayer. Suddenly a great shout from the shore, echoed by another from Richard, drew her thoughts again to earth.

The crowd of people on the shore were parting to admit the passage of a man and horse, both so large that the guide and the animal he bestrode seemed by comparison to become a boy and pony.

"What are they shouting for, Agnes?" asked the young man, eagerly.

"Because," said she, "yonder is the man who can save us yet, if man can do it."

She spoke with calmness, but there was a flush upon her cheek, and a light in her eye, which the other did not fail to mark.

"Who is it?" asked he, half angrily. For if men can be angry on their death-beds, how

much more when, though in view of death, they are still hale and strong.

"It is John Carlyon, of Woodlees," said she.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROAN AND HIS RIDER.

It might well have surprised and shocked a stranger to have seen that cluster of village folks watching for so long the approaching doom of two of their fellow creatures, without making—with the exception of the attempt we have mentioned—a single effort to save them. Their inaction, however, really arose from their thorough knowledge of the fruitlessness of such efforts. It was not the first time, nor the second, nor the fiftieth that the sea had thus marked out for itself prey in that same bay hours before it actually seized it, quite as certain of its victims as though its waves were already rolling over them.

Hundreds of years ago it was the same, when the guides were paid with Peter's pence by the old Priors of Mellor, and were prayed for during their perilous passage together with those entrusted to their guidance by the monks on Lily Isle, the ruins of whose oratory could yet be seen. As *Ave* and *Kyrie* had failed to save those who had delayed too long upon that treacherous waste, so good wishes availed not now. And they were all which could be given in the way of aid. It was very doubtful whether Richard Crawford could have saved himself by swimming even at the moment when it had been suggested to him. The strength of the tide of the *eau* was very great; "the furious river struggled hard and tossed its tawny mane," and firm footing there was none on either bank. It was this last fact which the stranger was slow to comprehend.

"Surely," he would say, "a good swimmer has only got to wait for the water to come up." But long before it could do so the victim found himself in something which was neither land nor water, and in which he could neither stand nor swim. Neither could boat nor horse get at him under such circumstances.

When the two cousins had first made towards the shore, they had to traverse only wet sand, which somewhat clogged their footsteps. Some patches of this were more watery than others, and through these, progress was more difficult. Presently the whole surface of the bay assumed this character, and then, where the patches had been, appeared shallow strips of water, as yet unconnected—superficially at least—with the sea. Through these they had to make their way, ankle-deep in sand, knee-deep in water. The bank upon which they

now stood was higher than the surrounding space, and as I have said, had only suffered the first change, from sand to a sort of white mud. The people on shore were as perfectly aware of what these two had had to contend with, as though they had accompanied them in their useless flight; and they knew now, as well as Agnes knew, that their life was to be reckoned by minutes, and depended upon how rapid or how slow might be the advance of the Bore or tidal wave.

This wave, which in winter or in storm was sometimes as tall as a man, was in summer very much less: but it never came up until the whole surface of the bay was under water, and all hope was therefore gone for those it found there.

It was to the menacing roar of this coming doom that both victims and spectators were now listening.

"It will be twenty minutes yet," said some among the latter; "Nay, not so long," said others; "the sooner the better, poor things," added one, to which many murmured a sorrowful assent.

All seemed to know how the sad mischance had occurred, and yet no one alluded to the man whose forgetfulness or more culpable neglect had caused the catastrophe. The reason of this was that William Millet, Stephen's only son, was among the crowd. His face was deadly pale, and twitched like one with the palsy. He would have given his life to have saved the victims of his father's folly, and, indeed, had almost done so, for it was he who had mounted the guide's horse, awhile ago, and strove to reach them. Every word that was spoken around him, notwithstanding the reticence above alluded to, went to his heart like a stab.

"How I wish we had brought them home in our cart," said one woman, who had been cockling upon the sands the preceding tide.

"Ay, or we in ours," returned another; "but there, how is one to know? Who could have thought——" and William knew, though his own eyes were fixed upon the cousins, that a glance from the speaker towards where he stood, concluded the sentence.

"The Lord will take Miss Agnes to himself, that's sure," said one in a solemn voice. "It is the poor folk who are to be pitied, rather than she, for they will miss her."

"Ay, that's true," murmured many voices.

"She will be in heaven in twenty-five minutes, or half an hour at farthest," continued the same speaker, with exactness,—a good man, by trade a cobbler, but who, imagining himself to have the gift of preaching, was sometimes carried beyond his last.

"And the lad, too, I hope," returned a fresh-featured dame somewhat sharply. "Did you not see how he would not leave her when Dick called out to him to swim. That will be taken into the account, I suppose."

"We have no warrant for that," resumed the cobbler, shaking his head.

"God will never be hard upon one so young and so bonny as yon," rejoined the dame, with a certain emphasis about the words, implying that the cobbler was neither the one nor the other.

"I trust not," returned the other simply. "Let us all entreat of Him to be merciful to those who are about to fall into His hands."

If there had been time to reflect, not a few of those present would doubtless have hesitated to follow such a spiritual leader as the mender of material soles; but as he raised his voice in passionate pleading with the

Almighty—using such texts of Holy Writ as seemed to him applicable to the circumstances —every man bared his head, and every voice joined audibly in the Amen that followed his supplication.

Never, perhaps, since the days of the Early Church, was any company gathered together by the seashore in act of worship more reverent and awe-struck than was that little handful of fisher-folk in those brief moments; but while the last solemn word was being spoken, and its sound growing faint and far overhead, as though already upon its way to the Throne of Grace, the clatter of a horse's hoofs was heard from the village street, and down the steep lane which led from it to the sea came a rider at full speed. His own height, as far as you might judge a man in the saddle, must have been considerably more than six feet, but the red roan which he

bestrode was so large and powerful, that steed and rider together looked quite colossal; just as though a mounted statue had descended from its pedestal, as in the days of portents.

"Make way, make way," cried he; and as the obedient crowd parted to right and left, "A rope, a rope!" he added, then gallopped right on to the white unctuous mud. So great and swift was the impetus with which he rode that he got beyond the place which the guide's horse had reached without much difficulty, or hindrance. Here, however, the roan began to stagger and slide, and then, as he sunk fetlock deep, and further, into the impatient ooze, to flounder in a pitiful manner. Upon such unstable footing the weight of his rider was evidently too much for his powers. Ere, however, that thought could shape itself into words among the lookers-on, the man leapt from his saddle, and while obliged to shift his

own feet with the utmost rapidity to save them from a like fate, he drew the animal by main force out of the reluctant mud, and led him trembling with sweat and fear, to the brink of the *eau*. Now the river, although swollen by this time to a most formidable breadth, and running very swift and strong, had about this spot a bed comparatively firm, and which seldom shifted; so that what seemed to the superficial observer the most perilous part of the whole enterprize—namely, the passage of the river—was, in reality, the least difficult. Horse and man seemed to be equally well aware of the fact, and when the former felt the water up to his girths, he for the first time ceased to plunge and struggle, and even stood still for his master to remount him.

"Up stream, up stream," roared the guide with trumpet voice to the two unfortunates,

who were watching the heroic efforts of their would-be rescuer with earnest eyes; "he cannot come straight across." And indeed, while he yet spoke, the current had taken man and horse, despite their weight and determination, many yards to the northward; and the two cousins hurried in that direction also, over the fast-dissolving ooze. If once the roan lost footing, himself and master would have been carried to a spot where the river ceased to be fordable, and where the banks were even of a less trustworthy nature than those between which they now were; and, but that his heavy rider kept him down, this would have assuredly happened. With such a weight upon him it seemed easier to the poor animal to walk than to swim; his vast strong back was totally submerged, and only the saddle visible; but his head showed grandly above the stream, the fine eyes eager

for the opposite bank, and the red nostrils pouring their full tide of life in throbs like those of a steam-engine. But for that head the rider himself, half-hidden by the tawny waves, might have been taken for a centaur. He looked like one quite as ready to destroy men's lives, if that should be necessary, as to save them; to snatch a beauty for himself from a Lapithean husband, as to preserve her from the ancient ravisher Death! He was by no means a very young man; but if he had passed the prime of life, he was still in its vigour, and that vigour was something Herculean. His hat had fallen during the late struggle with his horse, and the short brown curls that fringed his ample forehead showed here and there but scantily, although they had no tinge of grey. His large brown eyes, although fixed stedfastly enough upon the point he hoped to reach, exhibited little

anxiety, and certainly no fear. Their expression, although far from cold, was cynical, and the firm lips, pressed tightly together as they now were, yet spoke of recklessness if not of scorn. The gallant roan, as he neared the wished for shore, drew gradually out of water, until his girths scarce touched the stream; but his rider made no attempt to force him to climb the bank.

"Be ready," shouted he to those who awaited him; then leaving the saddle, he hastily motioned to Agnes to take the vacated seat. "No, no!" cried he, as she was about to put her foot into the stirrup-leather, "you must trust to me to hold you on," and he passed his huge arm round her dainty waist. "Hold fast by the other stirrup," said he to Richard, "and stand against the stream all you can." Then, leading his horse close under the bank to southward, so far as he

judged safe in order to allow for shifting, he turned his head to land. A shout of admiration had burst forth from those on shore when he had succeeded in crossing the *eau;* but every voice was hushed as the horse with its fair burthen, and the two men on either side her saddle, began the return passage. Nothing was heard save the laboured breathing of the roan and the increasing roar of the ocean, enraged, as it seemed, at this attempt to deprive it of its lawful prey. Richard, who was upon the side next the sea, had trouble enough to keep his footing; but the stranger had allotted to himself a far more difficult task; his huge form leant against the horse with all its strength, and so strove to neutralise the rush of the tide, which was bearing them all to northward.

"God bless you, Mr. Carlyon," said Agnes once, and then was silent.

The strong man bowed gravely and smiled —though his air was not so confident as when he had made the passage alone—but answered nothing. Indeed, he had no breath to spare. Clogged with his wet clothing, pushing through sand and water, and fighting against the weight of his two companions and the roan, as well as against the stream, his task was arduous enough, even for one of his enormous strength. The water deepened with every step, and the force of the current increased.

"Not so fast," cried Richard, staggering in vain to keep his feet.

"Faster, or you are a dead man," was the stern response.

They were at the very worst by that time and in the centre of the flood. Richard almost neck deep; the horse still feeling ground, but with his very nostrils in the

water; Agnes deadly pale, but bearing herself as resolute and quiet as though she were Undine herself. The great shoulders of John Carlyon still showed above the tawny waves. They had passed the centre, and were getting into shallower water. The breathing of the horse was, however, growing very laboured and painful.

"He will never climb the bank," said Agnes, calmly.

"I know it," returned the other; "but I shall save you, do not fear."

His eyes fell once upon her grave and glorious beauty, then turned anxiously to southward. The roaring of the sea was growing very near. As they reached the bank, and before the roan could lift his fore-feet, and so place the barrier of his neck and shoulders between his burthen and the shore, John Carlyon's arm swept Agnes from the

saddle and drew her up the bank. The poor roan, the bulk of his protector thus withdrawn, uttering a terrible snort of fear and anguish, was instantly whirled away. Agnes had stretched out her hand and caught her cousin by the collar of his coat, or he would assuredly have shared the same fate. As it was, the three together struggled on through the water, for all was water now. It was then, for the first time, that Agnes uttered a stifled cry of horror. The tidal wave was coming; within ten feet of them it reared its creaming crest. Carlyon saw it too, and stretched out one giant arm as though for help. As he did so something struck him sharply in the face, and his fingers closed upon a rope, thrown at him lasso-wise by some on the land. The next moment all three were under water, with a noise in their ears like the roar of a broadside from a three-

decker. But the line was being pulled taut, though not too sharply; and presently the three were dragged on shore in a tangled mass, like some great waif from a wreck.

The first to rise was Richard Crawford. He pushed his wet hair back with both his hands, and gazed vacantly at the other two, round whom the crowd was standing, although at some little distance, for they knew better, from long experience of like mischances, than to throng close about folks in such a plight, who need air above all things, and to whom at first all help is an encumbrance.

As consciousness returned, Richard's brow began to knit, and he strove feebly to unclasp the arm that still encircled his cousin's waist.

But the powerful muscles mechanically retained their hold.

Presently Agnes opened her large eyes and

gazed wonderingly about her; the colour rushed to her white cheeks, and her hand, too, sought to release itself from that which held her. At the touch of her cold fingers those of her preserver began at once to relax their grasp; but the next instant, catching sight of the ghastly face beside her, she desisted.

"He is dying," cried she; "fetch the doctor. Fetch Mr. Carstairs. Quick, quick!" and taking one great palm between her small hands she strove to recall in it the warmth that seemed to have fled for ever. Truly it seemed strange enough that this strong man, to whose Herculean force the pair were indebted for their safety, should be the last of the three to recover from the late shock. The fine face was pale as marble, except for a certain blue tint about the temples; the eyes between their half-shut lids expressionless and

dim; the limbs rigid; and the still curved left arm lying motionless beside him, which had so lately borne her from death to life. He did not want for tendance: other hands were chafing his wrists, and had unloosed his neckcloth, and propped his stately head; but she knelt by him still, ceaselessly adjuring them to fetch the doctor. At last he came; a middle-aged, intelligent man, with a quick step and voice.

"Bring blankets," cried he, sharply. Then poured the contents of a phial into the unresisting mouth.

"Is he drowned?" asked the young girl, in an agonised whisper.

"No, ma'am, no, it is not that," returned he, hastily, but with an anxious look. "Here, William, you and three more take Mr. Carlyon to my house. Gently, gently; keep his head up. No, my dear Miss

Agnes," said he, firmly, as the girl strove to accompany the party, still clinging to the hand that hung down cold and lifeless, "your presence will be worse than useless. Go home at once, and you, Mr. Richard, too"—for the young man had constituted himself one of the bearers of the inanimate body—"unless, that is, you wish me to have three patients to attend to instead of one. Stop!" The white set lips of John Carlyon began to twitch a little, and Mr. Carstairs bent down to listen. "Yes, Miss Agnes is safe, sir; don't disturb yourself, I beg. It was William Millet who threw the rope. There, I will answer no more questions; move on, men."

"He has spoken, he will live, then," exclaimed Agnes, joyfully. "Oh, tell me, we have not caused his death?"

"No, ma'am, *you* have not caused it. That is—what nonsense I am talking. You

should never bother a medical man, Miss Agnes," said Mr. Carstairs, testily, "during his professional duties. Go home and get to bed. You are as wet as a mermaid. I will bring you word of Mr. Carlyon to-night."

"This Carlyon is a fine fellow, whoever he is," observed Richard Crawford, as the two cousins walked swiftly homeward by the side of the bay that had so nearly proved their grave; "but who *is* he?"

"He is the owner of Woodlees, the estate that lies between us and the earl's."

"A rich man, I suppose, then. Is he a married man, or a widower?"

"He has never been married, I believe," said Agnes, changing colour in spite of all her efforts to prevent it.

"Oh, yes, I remember now," observed Richard, drily. "He lives rather a queer life, don't he?"

Agnes threw at him a glance of reproach, almost of resentment.

"He has just saved our lives," said she.

"Yes, true; he is a fine fellow, as I said, whatever he is. I shall certainly make a point of calling upon him to thank him in person on behalf of us both. Carlyon—what an odd name. It's scarcely English."

"It was once French. The old family name, they say, was Cœur-de-Lion," answered Agnes, coldly: "nor can it be denied that its present inheritor worthily bears the title. He has shown himself a lion-hearted man to-day."

CHAPTER IV.

A TERRIBLE TURK.

"Well, doctor, you are not going to send for Puce, are you?" was the inquiry addressed by John Carlyon, as he lay upon the horse-hair sofa in Mr. Carstairs' uncheerful little parlour. The two men were alone; those who had carried the patient to the doctor's house having departed, well pleased enough to see the large brown eyes of Squire John gaze upon them once more in their old kindly fashion. "It is not time to think about the Rev. Mr. Puce yet, is it?"

"No," returned the doctor, gravely; "it is not necessary to think about Puce, Mr. John;

but it is always worth a man's while to think about God."

Mr. Carlyon turned his yet pale face very sharply round upon the speaker. But Mr. Carstairs was gazing through the wire blind upon the dusty village street, and he could gather nothing from the expression of his shoulders.

"My good friend, you are rather like Puce yourself in one thing," resumed the patient, dropping his eyelids, partly from weariness—for he was still very weak—and partly because it was his wont so to do when indulging in sarcasm; "although his trade is to cure souls, he dearly loves to recommend all sorts of patent medicines, which he protests have done him good; so much so, that I sometimes think he is a paid agent of Parr or Holloway; and you, in the same way, and perhaps in retaliation for his conduct, I have

observed to take *your* opportunities of dropping in a word or two of religion."

"It is not so altogether unreasonable, Mr. Carlyon, as you seem to imagine; if I had made an investment which produced a very tolerable percentage even now, and which promised to pay a thousand-fold at some future time, is it not natural that I should give a hint to my friends that they also might lay out their money to so great an advantage?"

"Very good, doctor. It is extraordinary with what a gift of imagery the profession of religion seems to endow its advocates. They take up their parable at the shortest possible notice, just as a mere infidel might pick up a stone. There is Puce, for instance, who when pushed by simple folk like me, will envelope himself in a mist of metaphor, like any cuttle fish, and so escape. When a man becomes

a parson it really seems as if he could no longer speak straight. His words begin to wheel about the subject supposed to be next his heart, "like doves about a dove-cot," but never alight upon it. He studies to say the least he can in the most words."

"I don't think you are much worried by sermons, Mr. Carlyon," returned the other, drily.

"Well, it is true, I don't give Puce much opportunity for punishing me in that way. But I heard him preach only last Sunday."

"You were not at church, were you?" ejaculated the other, turning a face of great amazement upon his patient.

"Not *in* church, but I was just outside, so that not a single trope was lost upon me. Berild and I were wandering about in the sunshine, and while he cropped a little churchyard grass, I thought I would get some

spiritual provender for myself. We were quite alone out there, for the earl was at church—he never fails to go once a year, you know, and not a soul (worth saving, that is) in all the parish but was there. Not only a great muster of carriage people and gentility, but all the fine-woolled sheep from the cobbler's fold. You may talk of the dangers of dissent, but if they get to be serious you have only to ordain half a hundred of the junior nobility and send them into the disaffected districts, and not a female saint but will return to her allegiance forthwith. The attention of the congregation—nobody thought of looking at *me* when I peeped in—seemed to be about equally divided between heaven and his lordship; but that of Puce, I will do him the justice to say, was entirely concentrated upon the crimson pew. 'Now,' thought I, 'here is our reverend friend's op-

portunity for saying a word in season. He has this chance but once in twelve months, and surely he will not fail to take advantage of it. There will be something in the discourse for his lordship's particular ear (as indeed, there was, although scarcely of an edifying kind), or else he is even a more pitiful sneak than I take him for.' I confess I was curious to hear the elegant periphrasis by which he would delicately refer to the existence of Mademoiselle Debonnaire, the latest acquisition to our respectable neighbourhood, and whom I had just met, with two of his lordship's grooms sitting behind her, driving a pair of the prettiest little cream-coloured ponies in the world. An allusion to this particular weakness, if not to the object of it, might surely have been hazarded, considering the very advanced age of the noble sinner, and the extreme probability that Puce

would never catch him at church again. And yet what do you think that sermon was about? From first to last it was a denunciation of the unpardonable crime of poaching. The snare of the wicked one was represented in the literal form of a wire and horse-hair springe; his net was a partridge net; and the human agent he found most ready to his hand was an uninquiring game dealer."

"The fact of Puce happening to be a mean skunk—which I grant very readily," observed Mr. Carstairs, cheerfully, "does not invalidate the claims of religion. Of course it is very sad that a clergyman should pander to his patron in the manner you describe, and I have no doubt truly, for I heard that his lordship congratulated him on his discourse. But the man is not aware of his own degradation. Many persons who fill our pulpits are quite ignorant of the true nature and

beauty of the thing which it is unhappily their lot to preach. You might as well expect to find in an organ-grinder, nay, in the monkey whose mission it is to sit upon the organ, an appreciation of Mozart."

"It appears to me, doctor," observed Mr. Carlyon, slily, "that that last remark reflects upon the Church as well as the parson. You don't think much of hurdy-gurdies, I suppose!"

"I think a good deal of Mozart," answered the other, coldly. "Man's attempts to express his religious sentiments may fall very short of what he feels; his apparatus of worship may be exceedingly incomplete; but to deny the necessity for an operation merely because our means are inadequate for perfect success, seems to me illogical; and, if you will forgive me, rather ungenerous."

"Now, don't get angry, my dear doctor," observed Mr. Carlyon, laughing; "*I* have no objection to the monkey and the organ, I do assure you. I even pay them what is customary without a murmur, although they are far from pleasing to me. I am not like the cobbler who is always refusing to pay his church-rates."

"No; nobody accuses *you* of being a hypocrite, Mr. Carlyon," returned the doctor, not unwilling to exchange argument for agreement, even if only upon the demerits of a ranter. "That Job Salver is certainly a most offensive humbug. I understand the fellow was singing a psalm-tune on the shore yonder, within hearing of that poor girl and boy, instead of stirring a finger to help them. Both would have solved the problem long ere this which you and I have often so vainly contended about, had their safety depended

upon that whining charlatan, who ventures to oppose himself to all authority, speaking evil of dignities and things that he understands not."

"And yet," said Mr. Carlyon, thoughtfully, "it is very curious—but the singing of that very hymn did, in point of fact, save those two lives. Red Berild and I were going slowly home, and had even reached the cross-roads, when the sound of the psalm-singing reached us; whereupon, instead of riding down the hill to the Hall, I cantered up the rise to see what they were making such a noise about. Then, thanks to poor Berild, who did the half mile in about a minute, we got down just in time. It was a precious narrow thing even then; and if it had not been for William Millet and the rope, we should all have been in kingdom-come by this time—that is, if your views are correct. If

otherwise, we should have been as the jockeys say 'nowhere'—out of the human race altogether."

"And the thought of that gave you no uneasiness, Mr. Carlyon, eh?" inquired the other, sharply, and regarding his patient with great earnestness.

"I did not think about it, doctor, for there was no time for thought, but only for action. If I had been quite certain that I was going to my death, I don't quite know how I should have felt. All change is disagreeable to a man who has reached my time of life; if you were to tell me, 'You will die in an hour from this time exactly'—as in certain cases you doctors are acquainted with—it would 'give me a turn.' If I know myself, however, I should certainly entertain no fear. There is nothing terrible to me in the idea of annihilation."

"What? to lie in cold obstruction and to rot?"

"In other words, to go to sleep and not to wake again, my good doctor. What is there objectionable in that? That is one of the ideas which it is conventionally agreed upon among religious people to shudder at. I am very much mistaken, however, if nine-tenths of the good folks, who express themselves so strongly upon this subject, would not gladly welcome extinction rather than run the risk of a much worse thing."

"What! would men be content to die like dogs?" exclaimed Mr. Carstairs.

"Ay; and most of them would think themselves lucky in so doing. I am as certain of that as that I am lying upon this sofa. Many who are not absolutely terror-stricken, are conscious that they have been more fortunate in this world than they deserve; and

are afraid of matters being righted in the other to their own disadvantage. A few, such as my lord up at the park yonder, justly conclude (with some character in one of Bulwer's novels, I forget whom or which), that it is doubtful whether in any other state of life, they can possibly be so well off as they have been in this. For my own part, I sympathise with none of these people; but I have not found life so pleasant as not to have got over my first love for her. It is only the young who are in reality enamoured; for though the old cling to her oftentimes with impotent desire, it is not because they love her, but because they fear the shadow that is beckoning them away. As for myself, I have said I have no fear, and what loss can death inflict upon me? You and I are very good friends, doctor; but we can endure to part from one another even though it should be for

ever. Observe, for yourself, how absence cools the friendship of the very best of friends; the materials of it being generally far from lasting. Love, indeed, is said to be 'for evermore;' but I am not in a position to offer an opinion on that delicate matter; and as for the ties of blood, I am sure I could bear to part from my only sister, Margaret, with equanimity; and I rather fancy that both she and nephew George would suffer such a calamity with equal resignation, provided they got Woodlees."

"Mrs. Newman does not behave to you in a very sisterly manner, I must own," said the doctor, grimly; "but there is one excuse to be made for her; she is a bilious subject. Without revealing matters that should be sacred, I can assure you, as her medical attendant, that she has a great deal of bile."

"Has she?" returned the other, shrugging his shoulders. "I thought it was religion: the symptoms of both are often much alike to the unlearned."

"My dear Mr. Carlyon," said the doctor, earnestly, "I am no bigot; I don't print texts round the wrappers of my physic bottles as some do."

"What moderation!" exclaimed Mr. Carlyon.

"But, I do confess," continued Mr. Carstairs, without heeding the interruption, "that nothing annoys me more than these illnatured carpings against what is to me a great truth. From your lips they are especially obnoxious. Here is a man who has just risked his life—nay more, put it in the most imminent peril—to save two helpless fellow creatures deserted by all other human aid——"

"Tut, my friend, you make too much of a

small matter," interposed the other, with an air of some annoyance; "and besides, you know," he added gaily, "I have no right to any credit; it was not even a good action in your eyes."

"I am d——d if it was not!" cried Mr. Carstairs, slapping his hand upon the little round table till the phial danced in the tumbler.

"Nay, the condemnation falls on *me*," replied the other bitterly. "What, have you served the office of churchwarden, and yet not learnt that works done by unbelieving wretches (like me, my dear sir,) lack grace of congruity, and even have the nature of sin? It would have been wrong for me *not* to have assisted those two poor tidebound fellow-creatures, and it was also wrong for me to do so. Hit high, hit low, we can never please you theological gentry."

The speaker's face was very stern and pale, and his voice shook with passion.

"I do not deny," he continued, "that there are worse Churches than the Church of England. There is one that says 'For the manifestation of the glory of our Creator, some men are fore-ordained unto everlasting death;' and yet they say the nation that invented *that* dogma has no sense of humour. Well, sir, *your* Church is only a little less barbarous than this."

"John Carlyon, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," returned the doctor, walking swiftly towards the couch. "To say such words within sight of yonder church, where your poor father is lying in his grave, is shameful. You should have respect for his memory, if for nothing else. What an example of faith, of piety, of goodness, was thrown away upon you in that excellent man's life;

how you disgrace his teaching; how you insult——"

"That will do, sir," said Carlyon, coldly, raising himself with difficulty from the sofa. "I congratulate you upon having discovered a method for shutting my mouth. I can walk alone, sir, thank you, very well."

So saying he seized his hat and staggered to the door. His countenance wore the same leaden hue as when he lay upon the beach, an hour or so ago, just rescued from the sea, but it had not the same vacant expression. He looked angry, and pained, but also something more and worse. If it had been possible in a man of such calibre—both mental and bodily—as John Carlyon, one would have said that he looked panic-stricken.

"I am sorry," began the doctor, pleadingly; "it was cruel and unfair, I own."

But holding up one hand as though to

deprecate all further talk, Carlyon groped about the door with the other, and presently getting it open, felt his way along the passage like a blind man, and so into the street, and took his way towards home.

"I am a beast," exclaimed Mr. Carstairs, self-reproachfully, standing in his little porch and watching his departing patient move slowly and painfully away. "And the beast which I am is an ass. I have done him more harm than good in every way. Matters could scarcely have been worse, had I told him the truth at once, although he did say it would have 'given him a turn,' and yet how could I have known that the mention of his father would have put him into such a state! it was a mercy he did not drop down dead at my very door. Such a gallant, honest fellow, too! He will be a loss to the world, although, may-be, the world, as he says, will be no loss

to him: but as for you, Robert Augustus Carstairs, F.R.C.S., and late overseer of this parish, when *your* turn comes to be grassed over, you will be a loss to nobody, being an ass."

CHAPTER V.

COMING HOME.

The short, yet straggling street, of the village of Mellor was always very quiet. There was but little traffic through it, and still less in it, for it contained but one shop, full indeed of the most various commodities, from Bath note-paper to lamp-black, from Dutch cheese to Lancashire clogs, but not much frequented by customers. Most people stopped at the window, and turned away again after dropping their letters into the slit beneath it, for it was also the post-office; and there were not many folks even to post letters at Mellor. The houses on the north side of the street, which was built on a hill, made the most

show, standing back from the road, and at a considerable elevation above it, with neat little gardens, spread apron-wise before them; eyeshot from the windows of these dwellings flew over the heads of passers-by. On the south side of the houses all looked out to seaward over unseen gardens of their own, and turned their backs to the road, so that it was quite possible, providing only that he escaped the notice of the lynx-eyed post-mistress, for a wayfarer, however remarkable in his personal appearance, to pass through Mellor street without being observed. During the despatch of the mails at 5 p.m., a ritualist in full vestments, or the Lord Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench, in wig and gown, might have very possibly made a progress through it from end to end (if only they maintained a dignified silence), without any Mellorite being the wiser.

It was about 5 p.m. that John Carlyon took his way through Mellor, and that he was not spoken with by any one after what had recently occurred was a pretty convincing proof that he was not seen. The village inn, indeed, had more than its usual fringe of idlers about it, eagerly discussing the very occurrence in which he had so distinguished himself; but it stood apart from the road, on a little plateau of its own, and was avoided altogether by those who took the turning to the right which led to Mellor Church. Mr. Carlyon took this way. The church tower, being very highly placed, could be seen far out to sea, and was even used as a landmark for ships. The churchyard itself stood much above the village, and, indeed, was the highest point save Greycrags (whereon the house occupied by the Crawfords was

situated, and after which it was named), within some miles of Mellor; it was therefore free from all overlookers. Something tempted him, as he passed by, to push open the wicket and enter that great green resting-chamber, where no sleeper turned uneasily on his pillow, or longed with impatience for the morning. Very many generations lay beneath those grassy mounds, or in the vaults of the old church, which was almost coeval with the abbey, the ruins of which could be seen from where he stood. Another phase of Christianity had succeeded to the ancient faith, but little change had been made in externals. Two stone images in lichen-covered niches stood on either side the porch, but time or the sea-winds had deprived them of all recognisable features; they might be meant to represent saints or demons. The stoup for holy water still had its place in

the wall. Within lay many a cross-legged crusader—

> Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,

or

> Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails ;

the dead representatives of a dead form of creed, lying, unargumentatively enough, beside Protestant lords of the manor, and other modern worthies of high degree. In the superior sanctity of the chancel, under what looked like a four-post bedstead of marble, hung with 'scutcheons, and sculptured with heraldic emblems, reposed the long line of ancestors of Charles, Earl Disney, whose anxiety for the preservation of game had been so recently sympathised with from that moth-eaten pulpit.

"All silent and all damned," quoted Carlyon, thoughtfully, as he gazed through the iron gate which suffered the cool evening air to purify this sanctuary, while it kept more

substantial intruders out. "There is nobody at least to contradict it. What thousands of years of death have these good folks to tell of, yet not an hour's experience will the greatest gossip among them reveal."

He turned from the dark porch, where a certain musty flavour of mortality seemed to make itself apparent, and set his face to the sea breeze, fresh as on the day when it first blew from the gates of the sun.

The wavy west was one great field of gold, with just a ripple upon it like corn at harvest time that smiles to find the sovereign wind its wooer. A few white sails flecked its glittering surface, and a faint black line of smoke above one out-going steamship blurred the red sky. From the village beneath thin blue smoke ascended for a little way, till it mixed with the bluer air and was lost; and far off, on the other side of the bay, wreaths of grey

marked the unseen spots where man was living and labouring. Here was death—yonder was life; you seemed to step from one to the other at a single stride. Both hushed, for not a sound could be heard, save the dreamy lap of the sea, less like sound than silence; yet the one so chill and hopeless, the other so bright and busy!

"There seems certainly something in what Carstairs says," mused Carlyon; "that is, at times. To lie here for ever, first bones, then dust, has truly little charm; and if it be so, death is a bathos, and the scheme of creation —that is the proper phrase, I believe—a total failure. Perhaps it is: who knows?"

It was not, however, for purposes of philosophic speculation that the speaker had sought this place of tombs; and the mention of Mr. Carstairs seemed to remind him, although indeed he had not forgotten it, but purposely pro-

crastinated the matter, of what had attracted him thither. He walked with a quick step towards a secluded corner of the churchyard, and black with the shadow of an enormous yew; within a square of small stone pillars, not unlike milestones, and connected by iron chains, stood a huge monument of granite.

"Thanks to him, I have never set foot here save last Sunday, since the day we buried him; so this will be new to me," muttered the visitor, as he held aside a layer of yew and let the sunshine in upon the gilded letters of the inscription, now fast fading and almost effaced:—

TO THE MEMORY OF
RALPH CARLYON,
OF WOODLEES,
A DEPUTY LIEUTENANT FOR THE COUNTY AND JUSTICE OF THE PEACE.

A Prudent Father,
A Pattern Husband,
A Perfect Christian.
He closed a Life of Piety, Feb. IXth. 1840.

"Those are Meg's adjectives," muttered the intruder, grimly; "but what is this in Latin? I did not give her credit for the classics.

'Gone to join the majority.'

That was not Meg's, I'm sure. Ah! I remember now. He told me something of his wish to have a certain sentence placed above his grave, and I—thinking it was some pious text—bade her let it be done. Well, this is truth, at all events, and consistency likewise, for this perfect Christian and Deputy-lieutenant always held with the majority while he was alive. But, silence, bitter tongue. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum;* and, moreover, this dead man was my father. Let me try to feel pious and regretful at the tomb of my parent. Alas! I cannot do it. But the doctor was wrong too when he accused me of undutifulness to this man. His example of faith has *not* been thrown away upon his son. I have

not disgraced his teaching. I *have* had respect for his memory, if for nothing else, heaven knows! Ralph Carlyon," murmured he, after a pause, "I forgive you; and if what these gravestones preach be true, God himself can scarce do more. You have placed a gulf between me and all good folks, dead and alive, as broad and impassable as that which is said to separate the wicked from the blessed in the world to come. Thanks to you, I have no happiness in the present, nor hope in the future. Forty years of wasted life lie already behind me; there may be as many still to come, for I am very strong. Is it likely that these will be more tolerable than those already passed, with youth exchanged for age, and strength for weakness? It is idle to suppose it; the years must soon draw nigh of which, even good men say, they find no pleasure in them. I have no friend in either heaven or

earth. My kindred wish me dead that they may possess my goods. They are welcome, I am sure, although I doubt whether old Robin and the rest would like the change of dynasty. I wish they had had their desire this very day. I wish that William Millet had been a little less ready with his rope. But no; I don't say that, for then there would have been an angel less in the world—Agnes Crawford. I believe in angels so far. It would have been worse for others, if better for me. She is everybody's friend—everybody's, that is, who is wretched—except mine. They have told her lies about me without doubt, and even the truth would make her shrink from me as she never shrinks from mere pestilence and contagion."

He was leaning over the wicket gate and looking northward, where Greycrags, clothed and crowned with its verdant and noble trees,

rose from the margin of its little bay like one green tower.

"No woman loves me, or will ever love me, being what I am," he went on; "and least of all, one like her." A far-off noise—the beat of a horse's hoof—struck upon his ear. "Even my horse is lost; the only living thing that cared for me. Poor Berild! you died doing your duty, good nag, and if there be a heaven for horses——Why, surely I should know that footfall; and unless there are equine ghosts that haunt the way to their late stables, this is my own Red Berild coming home!"

He passed swiftly through the gate, and, standing in the middle of the road, clapped his hands together and whistled shrilly. Immediately the trotting sound was exchanged for a canter; and as the coming steed turned the corner and came within sight, a faint but

joyful whinny proclaimed his recognition of his master. He never stopped till he had his nose in his human friend's hand, and was rubbing his tall, stiff ear against his bosom. There was nothing wrong with him, as Carlyon's anxious inspection soon discovered; but he had evidently gone through great exertions. His heaving flanks were dripping as much with sweat and foam as with salt water; his broken bridle trailed upon the ground; his saddle was half turned round; his legs were covered with black mud and sand up to the knees.

It was a touching sight to see the meeting between those two old friends.

"My brave Berild!" cried one.

And the other, though he could not speak, answered, "Dear master!" with his eyes.

Then setting the saddle straight, and knotting the bridle, so that his favourite should

not be incommoded, John Carlyon once more resumed his way towards home, man and horse walking together side by side. The former seemed for the time to have recovered his usual spirits, whistling snatches of melody, or even occasionally trolling out a patchwork of song; but as he began to descend the other side of the long hill, and to lose sight of all the glorious landscape, and of Greycrags with the rest, his depression returned.

Woodlees was not a place to create high spirits. It was a fine mansion, with a small deer-park attached to it, and no less than three terraced gardens. But the house itself was in a hollow. Notwithstanding that the sea lay so near, not a breath of its fresh clear air ever visited it. It seemed to have an atmosphere of its own, odorous indeed, but faint and oppressive, in which it was an effort to breathe. For size and antiquity,

it was an edifice of which the proprietor might reasonably (if there is any reason in such pride) be proud. The hall, with its huge painted windows—the spoil, it was said, of Mellor Abbey—and splendidly carved chimney-piece, was undoubtedly very fine, if somewhat dim and cheerless. The grand staircase of polished oak had for its every alternate baluster a twisted column of vine or briony, but then it was a very sunshiny day on which they could be seen without a candle. There were only two cheerful rooms in the whole house. One, the large drawing-room, now never used, the French windows whereof opened immediately upon the Rosery, and over the huge fire-place of which was a vast sheet of glass, so that you could sit in the warm glow and watch the snow-flakes whiten the broad carriage drive, and deck the ever-greens in bridal raiment. The other, the

octagon chamber in the tower, John Carlyon's smoking-room, whence could be seen Mellor Church and Greycrags, and, far to the south, a strip of distant sea that was never sand.

Mr. Carlyon made straight for the stables, and saw the wants of his four-footed friend attended to with his own eyes, then strolled across the garden towards the house. At the open front door stood an old man with a scared face.

"God 'a mercy, Mister John! what is it now?"

"What is what now, Robin?" echoed the Squire, in an amused tone.

"Why, your masquerading, sir!"

"Oh yes! I had forgotten. I could not think what made them stare so in the stable. I have got Mr. Carstairs' clothes on, that's all; and they don't fit."

"Well, well, sir, you are the Squire now;

you do as you please. But I don't think my old master would ever have exchanged clothes with the parish doctor."

"I dare say not," returned Carlyon, drily. Then, after a pause, he added, laying his hand upon the old man's shoulder, "I know it is undignified, Robin; but I could not help it. Red Berild and I were caught by the sea, and so got wet through. Mr. Carstairs was good enough to rig me out."

"Ah!" sighed the butler, shaking his white head as he made room for the Squire to pass in, "my old master never *would* have been caught by the sea, not he."

CHAPTER VI.

A COUPLE OF VISITORS.

While Mr. Carlyon was yet arranging himself in garments more adapted to his six-feet-three of bone and muscle than the habiliments of the little doctor, Robin came up to say that two gentlemen were waiting for him downstairs—Mr. Crawford and Mr. Richard Crawford.

"I will be down directly," said the Squire, with a flush of pleasure; "into which room have you shown them?"

"Into the master's room, of course, Mr. John. Where else?" inquired the domestic.

"Very good, Robin," was the quick reply.

John Carlyon particularly disliked that

room, and the old butler knew it; but at the same time thought it his duty to combat so unnatural an aversion. It had been the favourite chamber of John's father, and ought, one may suppose, to have been agreeable to his son on that account. Otherwise, it had certainly few attractions of its own, being the gloomiest of all the reception rooms. A small apartment shut within an angle of the building, into whose old-fashioned, diamond-shaped panes the sun rarely peeped, and when it did so, could throw no cheerful gleam upon the cedarn wainscot, or the few family pictures disposed—and not happily disposed—upon its sombre surface. It seemed as though the old gentleman had preferred the company of the worst favoured among all his ancestors, with one exception. This was the full-length portrait of a young girl, whose short-waisted attire and tower-like arrange-

ment of her long fair hair, could not deprive her of the admiration due to great natural beauty. Seldom as it was that a sun-beam struggled in so far, when it did reach that exquisite face the whole room was lit up with its loveliness. Those luxuriant locks glittered as though gold dust—the meretricious fashion of a much later date—had been scattered upon them; the peach-like cheeks glowed with bashful innocence; the blue eyes gazed at you with a tender simplicity that was inexpressibly touching. This portrait faced the fire-place; and when the fitful gleams of flame fell upon it, the mobile features seemed really instinct with life. Nothing else was bright in this room, except the silver hilts of a yataghan and dagger that hung over the chimney-piece, and were kept untarnished by the butler's careful fingers. They had been brought by his old master from the East,

where he had travelled (not without some strange adventures, it was whispered, in which those mysterious weapons had borne their part) in his far back youth. Here, day after day, for many weary years the old man had sat, too feeble to stir abroad; and here, night after night, had lain when near to death. At last, upon a sofa bed, with his back to the picture and his face to the fire, he had died here. Perhaps it was its association with that last event which had made the cedar chamber distasteful to his son.

However, John Carlyon now entered it with a winning smile, and a courteous greeting for his two unexpected guests. With one of these, Richard Crawford, we are already acquainted; the other, his uncle, was a very tall old man, of distinguished appearance; one, who, though manifestly hale and

vigorous, and as upright as a May-pole, gave the idea of extreme age, unless some sorrow had done the work of years in emaciating his lengthy limbs, and deepening the caverns of his eyes. These last were very bright and black, and shot from under thick, white eyebrows one swift, suspicious look as the Squire entered, then gazed upon him frankly and gratefully enough.

"This is my uncle, Mr. Carlyon," said the younger of the two visitors, "come in person to thank you for your noble devotion in saving my dear cousin——"

"Nay, Richard," interposed the old gentleman, with dignity, and stretching forth an arm almost as long as Mr. Carlyon's own, though wasted to one-half its thickness, "I must thank him for *that* myself. You have preserved to me, sir, the dearest thing left to me in this world: my beloved and only

daughter. Accept the gratitude of one who, but for you, would have found the little remnant of life he has still to live very miserable and barren."

"I am most pleased, Mr. Crawford," answered the Squire, returning the pressure of the other's long, thin fingers, "to have been the instrument of saving, not only to yourself, but to the many who have experienced her unselfish benevolence, a life so priceless as Miss Crawford's. And for you, sir," here he turned to the young man, who was giving utterance to certain conventional expressions of gratitude upon his own behalf, "I am sincerely glad to have been able to have given you a helping hand in a difficulty that certainly might have been serious."

"Serious!" observed the old gentleman, "why, my daughter tells me that death stared her in the face."

"And so it did, uncle," answered Mr. Richard, frankly. "Mr. Carlyon makes light of the matter, only because he is used to risk his own life for strangers. Directly Agnes saw him she cried, 'There is the man to save us, if man can do it!' Twice before, as I hear, upon those very sands——"

"Hush, hush, my dear young sir," interrupted Carlyon, hastily; "your goodwill makes you exaggerate matters, or else you have been misinformed. In the first place, Miss Agnes Crawford is not a stranger to any one who lives near Mellor, and who has ears to listen to good report; and, secondly, possessing unusual advantages in my excellent steed, I should have been base indeed not to have used them on so critical an occasion. Had I done otherwise, I do assure you, it would have been the act of a coward," added he, turning towards his elder visitor; "and we

men who are over six feet high should at least be courageous, should we not?"

Up to this time, in spite of his host's invitation to be seated, Mr. Crawford had been standing, hat in hand, as though his visit was intended to be of the shortest; but at these words he sank slowly down upon the nearest chair, as though he had been pushed into it by main force, and in spite of himself. His long limbs trembled as with the palsy; and his thin face grew more wan and white than ever, except that in the centre of each hollow cheek there was a spot of burning red. His ashen lips endeavoured in vain to articulate.

"Good heavens! your uncle is ill," cried Carlyon, pulling the bell with violence; "what is it he should take? Wine—brandy? Speak?"

But before Richard could reply, the old man answered for himself, in tolerably firm

tones, that he was better now and needed no refreshment.

"The fact is, my dear Mr. Carlyon, this interview has a little unmanned me. I am very old, you see ; and for these many years I have lived a hermit's life. The sight of a stranger is quite a shock to me. Thank you : since the brandy has come I will take a little."

But Carlyon observed that he scarcely put his lips to the glass, and that while he spoke his bright eyes once more flashed forth such glances of anger and suspicion as certainly showed no lack of vital power.

"There, I am better now already," resumed Mr. Crawford, with cheerfulness. "Certainly, if there is an *elixir vitæ* for the old at all it is French brandy. I have some in my cellar at Greycrags,—and I trust you will come and dine with us shortly, and take a *petit verre* of

it after dinner,—which numbers as many years in bottle as I myself have been in the flesh; in other words, it is three-quarters of a century old."

"That would be a great attraction," said Mr. Carlyon, gallantly, "to any other house but Greycrags, which, however, possesses a much more priceless treasure. You have so overwhelmed me with your generous, but really exaggerated, gratitude, that I have not yet been able to ask after Miss Agnes herself. I trust she has escaped all consequences of her late adventure."

"Yes, I think I may say, that, except for a little fatigue, which it is only natural she should feel after having gone through so much excitement, my daughter is none the worse. She is used to cold, and even to getting wet through, in her perambulations among the poor. Richard and she walked home at their

best pace, so she has not felt even a chill. She was exceedingly anxious, however, upon your account; and indeed, from her statement, I scarcely hoped to find you so completely yourself again. So, as soon as Richard was ready, he and I drove to Mr. Carstairs' house, and finding you had gone home, ventured to follow you hither. We should have welcomed a much less valid excuse I am sure. What a charming place is this Woodlees of yours!"

"It is picturesque," said Carlyon, shrugging his shoulders, "viewed from without; but a lonely and cheerless place to live in."

"That must be the fault of its proprietor, surely," observed Mr. Crawford, with a meaning smile.

"No, sir, his misfortune," returned the other, drily. "However, my butler seems to have resolved you should be as unfavourably

impressed as possible, by showing you into this sombre room."

"Ah! there I differ from you," answered the old gentleman. "For my part, I like gloom. The worst of Greycrags is, that it is so exceedingly light; its uniform cheerfulness oppresses one like a too lively talker—a companion who is always in high spirits. In the whole house there is no quiet little den like this, where an old man may sulk by himself out of the sunshine. Not, however, that any room can be gloomy with such a glorious picture as that in it. Richard and I were agreeing, before you came down, that we had never seen a more charming face on canvas. Woodlees could not have been so lonely at one time, if, as I conjecture, that beautiful creature was once its mistress."

John Carlyon bowed gravely.

"What tenderness of expression, Richard,

is there not?" continued the old man, rising and approaching the picture. "It is almost painful in its pathos. Now, what epoch can this lady have adorned?—not your own, of course, and scarcely mine."

"She was my mother, sir," observed Mr. Carlyon, drily; then, after a pause, he added, "I should be sorry, Mr. Crawford, for you to carry away with you an impression of Woodlees derived from this apartment only. Let me persuade you to step up so far as the tower room, where perhaps you will take a cigar."

With these words he opened the door like one who would have no denial.

"My smoking-days are over," replied the old gentleman, smiling; "I am a worn-out profligate in that way, and can only partake of the mere flavour of vice from the snuff-box: yet I will gladly visit your sanctum.

But what a long way up it is; why, its quite an eyrie."

"Yes, and here I sit, a wretched, middle-aged bird, all alone and moulting."

"It should be a nest full of eaglets; the very room for a nursery, sir," observed Mr. Crawford, unheeding the other's remark, and standing in the centre of the spacious chamber with its three huge windows. "What a beautiful prospect! See, Richard, yonder is Greycrags. My daughter and I have often wondered, Mr. Carlyon, to what use this tower which never shows a candle was put, and I think we must have come to the right conclusion, to judge at least by this telescope." He touched a large instrument standing on a brass tripod and turning on a pivot. "This is your observatory, is it not? You sit in the dark here and watch the stars?"

"Not I," returned Mr. Carlyon, smiling; "you give me credit for much more learning than I possess. But to keep a lamp burning here is very dangerous to folks at sea. It has been mistaken more than once for the light at Mellor point; and so, as I don't want to hold the candle in whose flame human moths may shrivel, I sit here in the dark. But as for the stars, I do not trouble myself with them."

"No: I see this is not a night glass," observed Mr. Crawford, turning the instrument to southward. "But what a field it has! This must have cost you a great deal of money."

"I see you are a judge of telescopes, Mr. Crawford. Yes, this was really a great piece of extravagance for me to indulge in; but it forms my only amusement. This is my watch-tower, from whence I survey the world, both

land and ocean. I can sit here and sweep fifty miles of sea. The least white spec out yonder, I can recognise, or know at least whether she is friend or stranger. Look now, to that sail in the south-east, hugging the land; that is his lordship's yacht, the *San Souci*—very much misnamed by-the-bye, if all tales concerning her proprietor be true. One would think she would never weather the point yonder."

"She never will," observed Mr. Crawford, decisively, who was watching her through the telescope.

"Not weather it! Permit me to look one moment. Ah, you don't know that yacht. She can sail nearer the wind than any craft in the bay. She is rounding it even now."

"She is doing nothing of the sort, sir," said the old man, smiling, and tapping his snuff-box; "look again."

"You are quite right, sir," cried Carlyon, much astonished; "she has missed stays. And yet I would have bet a hundred to one. What an eye you have: why one would think you had been born a sailor.—Good heavens! Mr. Richard, your uncle is taken ill again. It must be the tobacco smoke; I am afraid it was wrong of us to light our cigars."

Mr. Carlyon threw up the north window, the opposite one being already open, and so created a strong draft.

"I am better now," said the old man, feebly; "but it was not the tobacco smoke."

"My uncle sits with me while I smoke, every night," said Richard, coldly; "it must have been the exertion of coming up so many stairs."

"Yes, that was it, no doubt," added Mr. Crawford. "I am a very old man, Mr. Carlyon, and you must excuse me."

"My dear Mr. Crawford, I only reproach myself for my thoughtlessness in having persuaded you——"

"Don't mention it, don't mention it, I beg," answered the old gentleman, hurriedly; "but if you will allow my nephew to ring for the carriage. We shall see you soon at Greycrags, Mr. Carlyon? I shall behave better, I hope, as your host than I have done as your guest."

Leaning heavily on his nephew's shoulder, he slowly descended the uncarpeted and slippery stairs to the great hall; then, holding out a hand cold and clammy as that of a corpse, he bade Mr. Carlyon adieu, and climbed into his carriage. Richard also shook hands in as friendly a manner as he could assume; but the effort was sufficiently evident.

"I am sorry that I don't like Mr. Car-

lyon," observed the young man, after a long interval of silence, during which they had rolled through Mellor.

"Indeed," replied his uncle, in the dry and cynical tone which was habitual to him when there was no necessity for politeness. "That is of no great consequence; I beg, however, you will take pains to conceal your dislike while you remain under my roof."

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE ROAD.

The day after that on which the events which we have narrated took place, John Carlyon took a ride towards Mellor; although at first he had turned his horse's head another way. On his road thither he met with an interruption. Scarce had he left his own gates, when he came upon a knot of cocklers, just returned from the bay, and apparently making up for their superstitious abstinence from quarrel on the sands * by "having it out" on dry land.

* The cocklers never quarrel "on the sands," being under the impression that if they do so the cockles will leave their usual haunts with the next tide.

"What is the matter, my friends?" cried Carlyon, good-humouredly, interposing the huge bulk of Red Berild between two combative ladies who were contending for the possession of something that seemed to be all legs. "Have you found the spokes of one of Pharaoh's chariot wheels?"

At this, all burst into a guffaw, for Squire John was an immense favourite with this class, and his jokes always certain of acceptance.

"Well, sir, it might be," returned one; "at least, it's like nothing as we knows on; it seems of no manner of use, unless it's for pinching your fingers."

"Hulloa!" observed the squire, examining this curiosity with interest. "Where did you find this?"

"In the middle of the bay, sir, stuck in the sand," answered the same comely

dame who had held contention with the spiritual cobbler on the previous evening. "It might have floated away but for this great pad as it had hold of, just like a crab."

"My good Mrs. Mackereth, this is a camp-stool," explained Mr. Carlyon. "The pad, as you call it, was once a drawing-book, the weight of which, as you say, without doubt, prevented its wooden companion from going to sea."

"Lor, sir, why then they're Miss Crawford's!" ejaculated one of the late combatants. "I am sure if we had known, we should not have thought of keeping them. Directly after we have had our sup o' tea we'll take them round to Greycrags, won't us, Dick?"

"Stop; I am going there myself at once," said Carlyon, after a pause, "I will take the

book with me. Here are two half-crowns for your trouble, and I daresay you will not leave the house empty-handed when you have taken the camp-stool."

"No, squire, that's not likely; God bless her! yes, bless her," returned the cockler, dividing the spoil with her rival. "Miss Agnes has as open a hand as your own; long life to you both."

"And I wish that them hands was joined, and that that was your marriage blessing," observed Dame Mackereth, boldly. This good lady was deficient in delicacy as some of her sex and age not seldom are. The rest seemed to feel that their spokeswoman had gone a little too far, so her observation elicited no mark of adhesion. The situation was rather embarrassing for everybody but herself, who, pleased as a gunner who has sent a shell plump into the enemy's magazine, not-

withstanding that it has destroyed a score or two of innocent noncombatants, indulged in a very hearty fit of laughter.

"Good-morning, my friends," said Carlyon, coldly, moving slowly off with his prize under his arm. He did not venture to ride fast, for fear the merriment should at once become general. On the other hand, he could not help hearing the following observations.

"There, now, you have angered the squire, dame; your tongue is just half-an-inch longer than it ought to be."

"Nay, it's just the right length," returned that indomitable female; "and as for angering him, I'll be bound he's as pleased as Punch. I have not come to my time of life and been wooed and wed by three proper men—all in the grave, poor souls, worse luck—without knowing what a man likes said to him and what he don't."

And certainly John Carlyon wore a smile upon his face, as he trotted up the hill.

"I think I shall call *now*," said he to himself; "it will be only civil to take this drawing-book." He regarded it doubtfully enough, though, and indeed it had a rueful look. "One might almost think that Browning wrote of this identical article—

> "There you have it, dry in the sun
> With all the binding all of a blister,
> And great blue spots where the colour has run,
> And reddish streaks that wink and glister
> O'er the page so beautifully yellow."

What a fool I am to be taking it back to her in all this hurry! Nobody can ever draw upon it again. It has become a mere blotting pad as that old woman called it. She was right there, though not when she gave me her good wishes. What is the use of my crying for the moon like a great baby? Mr. Crawford may be willing enough to have

me for a son-in-law, and, indeed, I think he wished me to see that. But even if her affections are not engaged to her handsome cousin—and why not? he is half my age and has twice my good looks (if, that is, I have any left); and he has opportunities which I can never have; and he loves her, I could see that when they stood yonder upon the brink of their grave. The young bantam showed no white feather, that I will say. And Agnes —was ever such a courage seen in woman? I remember a picture at Antwerp, where they are binding the arms of a beautiful maiden before they cast her into some roaring flood—a Christian martyr, of course—and she wore just such an expression as this girl did last night when the sea was craving for her, and death within a hand's breadth. One would have thought that she had been in heaven already. And it is a saint like this that

you have set your mind upon, John Carlyon, to have for your wife, is it? No less will serve your infidel turn, eh? But this is no Margaret to be won by the aid of any Mephistopheles. Faust, Faust, let me recommend you to stick to your profession as a country gentleman; hunt, shoot, drink, and die."

Here he arrived at the fork of the road leading down from Mellor Church, and pulled his horse up.

"No," added he, grimly, after a pause, "I will send this book by hand, and then be off to London, where I have so many kind friends; some of them female ones. Then, when the invitation comes to dine at Grey-crags, I shall escape temptation, or rather, what is much less pleasant, certain disappointment. Yes, I'll go home and pack my portmanteau, no matter how old Robin may purse his lips; or suppose," continued he,

after a pause, "I let Red Berild decide the matter, as the knights of old used to do, letting the reins fall on the neck of their steed, and following his guidance rather than using their own judgment. But then that would be scarcely fair to—to the Greycrags alternative, since Berild is sure to take the road to his stables."

His fingers were yet playing irresolutely with the bridle, when a young man came suddenly upon him from the direction of the village, walking very fast, and with his cap pulled low over his brows, as though to avoid observation.

"Ah, William," cried Carlyon, cheerily; and it was curious to note how very cheery his manner at once became, when addressing others, no matter how sombre might have been his previous meditations while alone; "the very man I wished to see!"

"And I was on my road to Woodlees, sir," returned the other, gravely, "expressly to see you, Mr. Carlyon."

The voice was subdued and low for a man's voice, but with that earnestness and resolution in its tone which bespeak deep convictions in the speaker.

"Coming to *me*, were you, William? well, I am always glad to see you, but I think it was my business to come to *you*. When I looked in the glass this morning, and saw this bruise on my forehead, I said to myself, 'I have William Millet to thank for that.' The rope struck me just over the eyes; exactly the spot where they lasso wild cattle on the prairies. There must be no touching of hats; you must give me your hand, my friend, this morning. John Carlyon owes you his life."

The young man hesitated; then diffidently reached out his hand to meet the other's.

"You are mistaken, sir," said he, "except in the bare fact that it was I who threw the rope; though Miss Agnes is good enough to make as much of that as she can. But, indeed, so far from your being indebted to me or mine, it was through—it was through my poor father, sir," (here the young man fixed his eyes upon the ground,) "that the mischance happened at all. His old enemy tempted him and he fell."

"That's religion, William, and therefore unintelligible," returned Carlyon, coldly; "how was it, in plain terms?"

"Miss Agnes and her cousin went out in father's cart, to take a sketch of the bay from the middle of the sands."

The speaker had enunciated his words with painful difficulty, notwithstanding that he evidently strove to be distinct and collected, and now he came to a full stop altogether.

"Well, she was on the sands and sketching," said the other, impatiently; "I know that much already, for here is her drawing-book."

Under any other circumstances precise William Millet would have smiled to hear a gentleman and lady thus spoken of as a single individual, to whom moreover was attributed the sex that is ungallantly stated to be less worthy than the masculine; but he was full of a great trouble, and had no sense of anything else.

"It was arranged as usual, for he had been out, with Miss Agnes at least, on such expeditions before, that father should call for them on his way back to Mellor, and in good time. But while at the skeer he met with an old comrade, living on the other side of the bay, who not content with drinking the devil's health on shore—for that's what a man does

every time he puts his lips to the whiskey bottle—must needs take out his liquor with him upon the very sands. Sir, my father could not resist it. God forgive him, he drank till he scarce knew where he was; drank till he had clean forgotten his promise to Miss Agnes; and at last, went home with his companion, quite unconscious that death was drawing nigh to the best friend he had in the world, (for Miss Agnes has been his guardian angel, sir,) and all through his own fault, his own folly, his own crime."

"What a cursed fool the man must have been!" cried Carlyon angrily.

"A fool, sir, indeed, but I trust not cursed," returned the young man solemnly. "He is sorry enough now, is father; it is terrible to see his grief. But for you, Mr. Carlyon, he feels, that he should have been a

murderer. He will never hold up his head again, I doubt."

"Well, the sense of the mischief he so nearly wrought will at least have this good result, I suppose, that Stephen will leave off drinking," said Carlyon. "That will be good coming out of evil—isn't that the phrase?"

"God grant it may be so," returned the young man without noticing the other's cynical tone; "and that this awful lesson may save his soul alive."

"Humph," said Mr. Carlyon drily; then murmured to himself, "how characteristic all this is. To save a soul that is not worth saving two *other* folks are put within a hair's breadth of being drowned. And after all, the salvation is not with certainty effected. This sot will probably have to complete a murder before that satisfactory result is achieved. The calmness with which pious

folks talk of sacrificing the lives or interests of innocent people to benefit the spiritual condition of scoundrels of this sort, is most curious. It is like making a blood bath from the veins of children in order that some jaded voluptuary may become rejuvenescent."

"I see you are very angry, sir," resumed the young man humbly; "and I am sure I cannot blame you. You are the third person whose death would have lain at my father's door. It was your forgiveness that I was coming to ask for him, sir. He dursn't come himself. I think he would rather die than meet Miss Agnes just at present, although the dear young lady was very anxious to assure him of her pardon. He can look in no man's face. Oh, sir, he is bowed down to the earth with shame and sorrow."

"Well, William, you may tell him he has my free forgiveness as far as what he has done to me is concerned."

"But not as respects Miss Agnes? You will never forgive him that. That's what you mean, is it not, sir?" said the young man, looking up with flushed cheeks, for the first time. "That's what they all say, sir. They will point at father as the man that nearly murdered Miss Agnes; and yet she—Mr. Carlyon, if you are going up to Greycrags, ask her what *she* thinks they ought to do. What she thinks *you* ought to do. She says for her part, that if she had been downright drowned and that through that circumstance——"

"That will do, William," interrupted Mr. Carlyon, harshly. "Don't speak to me any more, or you will put me in a passion, and I shall say things that will hurt your feelings.

You are an excellent fellow yourself (although you are a fool in some things), and I have always had a good opinion of you. I am bound to be your friend for life, for what you did for me twenty-four hours ago, and you may depend upon me at all times. Good-bye."

"Stop, sir, stop!" cried the young man, laying his hand imploringly upon the other's bridle rein, and speaking in earnest, but rapid tones; "if, as you say, I have deserved anything at your hands, let it weigh with you now. The man that I speak of is cast down to the very dust—a broken man without hope; it lies in your example to give him one more chance among his fellow creatures here or not; and, oh, sir, he is my own father!"

A spasm passed across Mr Carlyon's face, the index of some mental struggle within,

and he did not speak for some moments. Then, with a very gentle voice, he said,—"What a good fellow you are, William. You may tell this man that I forgive him from the bottom of my heart, and I will do my best to persuade others to do so—for his son's sake."

"Thank you, sir; though I wish it had been for God's sake," returned the young man, fervently. "May He prosper you in all your undertakings, and call you home to Him at last."

But John Carlyon had already touched Red Berild with his heel, and did not wait for that reply. He had turned his horse's head towards Greycrags.

CHAPTER VIII.

EXPLANATORY.

The residence occupied by Mr. Crawford (for it was not his own) was as secluded as Woodlees itself, although in a different fashion. It was a house that stood on a hill, and yet it was hid. Trees environed it almost wholly, although not growing so near as to give the outlook any appearance of gloom. Curiously enough, the view of the sea, an advantage generally so desiderated in those parts, was altogether shut out from the mansion, the principal rooms of which faced the north-west, and commanded a grand inland prospect. In that direction, hill rose behind hill, until in

the distance their summits were usually mingled with the clouds; but on very bright days indeed this highest range stood grandly out against the clear blue sky, and in the late autumn, when the snow began to hoar their tops, afforded a really glorious spectacle. A still better view, of course, was gained from the summit of the hill from which the house was named, and hence it had at one time been a great resort for parties of pleasure during the summer months. This, however, was long ago; ever since Mr. Crawford's tenancy of the place a rigorous exclusion of all strangers had been maintained. Nay, it might almost be added of all friends, in such solitude had the old man lived for the whole five years he had passed at Mellor. So far, therefore, from enjoying its ancient reputation as a place of amusement, it was now in no very pleasant

repute. Being shut out from Greycrags, its poorer neighbours affected (like the fox who pronounced the uncomeatable grapes sour) to shun it; or perhaps they really had got to believe the tales which they had themselves invented against its proprietor when he forbad their making use of his grounds. What did the old curmudgeon mean by such conduct? People did not hedge themselves in, and keep themselves *to* themselves in that sort of way without some very good reason which (like the spirits at the Mellor Arms) were strong without being so very good.

What should induce an old gentleman of seventy years of age, with an only daughter of fifteen or so, to come and live at such a place as Greycrags—a man, one would think, to whom society would have been most acceptable, since his sole establishment upon his arrival had consisted of his daughter's atten-

dant, and she a black woman! He had engaged the few other servants his simple mode of life required, in the neighbourhood, and dropped down, just as it might be, (except that the black woman was credited with having hailed from what I may venture to call the opposite locality,) from the skies. It was nothing less than an insult to the intelligence of his neighbours, to behave in this unaccountable manner. Many of them would have forgiven his having closed the grounds, if they could have only found out why he did it. Even Mr. Puce, the parson, a man who had the reputation of knowing a great deal of the world (some even said that for a clergyman he had too exclusively given his attention to it) could make nothing of Mr. Crawford. He had called, of course, not without some thirst for information, and he found the new-comer

pretty much as we have seen him five years afterwards at Woodlees; with a curious look of suspicion about him just at first, which wore off before the visit was ended. A gentleman without doubt; Mr. Puce was ready to stake his reputation (not his professional one but the other) upon that fact; he was never mistaken as to whether a man had been accustomed to "move in the upper circles." He even expressed his opinion that Mr. Crawford was one who had been accustomed to habits of command. But this was going a little too far. The gentry of the locality who had not enjoyed the privilege of a personal interview with the mysterious stranger —they who had called and been "not-at-homed," and whose calls had not been returned—would not credit that much. It was only natural that Mr. Puce should make the most of his advantage; but after all, what

Mr. Crawford had alleged about himself was probably correct. He had made a competency by commerce, and very late in life had married a young wife, who had died in childbed with his little daughter. At nearly the same time his only brother and his wife had been carried off by fever in India, and their infant son had been consequently consigned to his charge. The Ayah who had brought him over had undertaken the management of both children; and servants of all sorts were now required. Mr. Puce could doubtless recommend some amongst his parishioners.

In short, Mr Crawford had been as business-like as polite throughout the interview; but although thus far communicative about his own affairs—indeed, evidently anxious to explain his position—there was nothing to be got out of him by cross-examination. Attired in deep mourning, his wasted form and

cadaverous features fully bore out his assertion that both as concerned health and spirits he was totally incapacitated for mixing with society; and this he hoped that Mr. Puce would be so good as to make known to any families who might be kind enough to entertain the design of calling upon him. He was not even at present well enough, he added (and during the last five years he had never been sufficiently convalescent to attempt the experiment), to attend public worship.

Indeed, notwithstanding the not unpromising character of that first interview, the rector had never got speech with his parishioner again. He had called perhaps half-a-dozen times at Greycrags (for he was piqued at having been so foiled in his dexterous home-thrusts and anxious to retrieve his reputation as a far-sighted investigator into social mill-

stones), but the answer he constantly received was that Mr. Crawford did not feel himself equal to see him—that is, except from a distance; for as the rector walked away discomfited it sometimes happened that the ancient invalid was watching him through his telescope from some umbrageous portion of the elevated grounds. As time went on a governess of mature years was provided for Agnes; and whether from the admirable "system" employed by that lady (and quite peculiar to herself as everybody's "system" is), or from her previous training under some one else, no more satisfactory female pupil was ever turned out of the educational workshop. Her accomplishments, however, were far outshone by her kindliness and charity. Even Mr. Puce was compelled to confess that the church had no such servant in his parish as the daughter of the recluse of Greycrags. She

was humble, too, and submissive to authority; not like that pestilent Job Salver, who blasphemously conceived that he had received the gift of preaching; nor even that William Millet, who carried his religion into every affair of life like some nursing mother who embarrasses her neighbours by considering the baby is included in all invitations.

Agnes Crawford, unlike her father, "went out" (as the phrase goes) a good deal; but not into what is generally called society. She was on excellent terms with the ladies of the neighbourhood, who had no worse term to apply to her than "very peculiar;" but she did not often visit them. No person (with any sense of propriety) could blame her for that, since having parted with her governess in her eighteenth year, she had no longer a "chaperon." Old Mrs. Heathcote, of Mellor Lodge, had indeed offered her services to "the

dear girl," in this matter—including some very appropriate personal properties, item: a front as black as the raven's wing; a splendid turban, with an ostrich feather in it; and a portrait of her deceased husband, worn as a stomacher, and almost the size of life. But Agnes, with grateful thanks, had declined her protection. She did not even care for either of the two county balls (one civil, the other military); and therefore it may be easily imagined that the ordinary evening parties of the neighbourhood failed to attract her. Dinner parties were not given about Mellor—a neatly written statement that the pleasure of your company was requested to tea being the favourite form of invitation—but it is my belief that Miss Crawford would not very much have cared even for going out to dinner. She only took other people's dinners out to them in a basket; and when they were sick,

supplied them with little comforts—made inexpressibly more comforting in their ministration. Thus it might have easily happened that not moving in the best local circles (to borrow Mr. Puce's imagery) Agnes had never so much as spoken with John Carlyon, although so near a neighbour.

The fact was, however, that Mr. Carlyon did not move in them either, or rather had not done so for many years. He had flown off from them at a tangent of his own free will, or perhaps, as they themselves averred with some complacency, they had made him fly. The squire at Woodlees had very much over-rated his social position if he imagined that he might think as he liked, or at all events might express his opinions. Because the Earl Disney thought fit to absent himself from public worship fifty-one Sundays per annum, that was no excuse for Mr. John

Carlyon's absence therefrom for fifty-two. Nor had he even the decency, like Mr. Crawford (an old man whose case was shocking to contemplate, but who had yet some sense of shame), to frame an excuse. The squire was the picture of health, and might be seen, Sunday after Sunday, starting for his gallop on the sands, while all the other gentry of the neighbourhood were proceeding with demure faces to listen in the proper place to the clergyman of their parish. These gentlemen, his sometime companions in the hunting-field, would look up in rather a sheepish manner and say, "How do, Carlyon?" as he met or overtook them on such occasions; but their wives never vouchsafed him a nod. Nay, as soon as he had passed by on his ungodly errand, they would often anticipate Mr. Puce's discourse by a little sermon of their own, or even bring the tell-tale colour into their lord's

cheek by stating their belief that he himself would rather be on horseback at that very moment like yonder wicked man, if the truth were known. It is fair to add, however, that it was not merely Mr. Carlyon's absence from church which caused him to be thus sent to Coventry (not a wholly disagreeable place, he averred in his cynical way), but also a very deplorable habit he had of speaking disrespectfully of religion. He protested he never did so unless in self-defence, and when belaboured by the weapons of the dogmatic; but not only was this denied, but the defence, such as it was, was disallowed. He ought to have been thankful for the correction; and at all events, even in war, folks are never justified in poisoning wells or using Greek fire. What aggravated the matter, too, above all things, was that John Carlyon's father had been one of the best and most orthodox of men. While

he lived no evidence of his son's depravity had been afforded; but no sooner had his example been withdrawn than the young squire had thrown off the mask, and appeared in his true character as infidel and scoffer. For the rest he was a man of daring courage, and open-handed generosity; but these virtues, of course, only made his irreligious opinions the more to be deplored. Everybody in Mellor did deplore them, and especially Mrs. Newman, his widowed sister, a lady of most unimpeachable views in spiritual matters, although in worldly affairs she had the reputation of being over prudent. With regard to money, of which she had a plentiful supply, she was even called close-fisted. The shrewd husband of one of the poor women, whom it was her pleasure to edify, once observed of Mrs. Newman that "You might get a ton of texts from her easier than an ounce of tea," and it

must be confessed that the remark was not without foundation.

John Carlyon and Agnes Crawford, then, except for those terrible minutes on the lessening sand, had never met, although each had been made well aware, by report, of the character of the other. "She will thank me," mused the squire to himself, as he rode up to the front door at Greycrags, "and then she will shrink from me as from an adder."

CHAPTER IX.

GREYCRAGS.

"Mr. Crawford has not at present left his chamber, being unwell," was the reply given by the servant to Mr. Carlyon; "but Mr. Richard is somewhere about the grounds, and I will let him know you are here. Miss Crawford is in the drawing-room, sir, if you will step this way."

Twice or thrice, but not more, Carlyon had had an opportunity of observing Agnes with attention, but he thought that she had never looked half so lovely as when rising hastily, though with grace, from a table at which she was putting some finishing touches to a drawing, she came forward to meet him with

heightened colour, and outstretched hand. On the day before, her beauty had struck him indeed as wonderful; but then it was something out of nature, if beyond it. The expectation of immediate death had glorified that charming face, and changed it to something celestial; it had presented the chastened and unearthly loveliness which the moonbeams cast upon some fair landscape. To-day, though radiant as a sunbeam, she looked

> "A creature not too bright and good
> For human nature's daily food."

"Mr. Carlyon," said she, "I have to thank you for my life; what words shall I find in which to do so?"

"None, my dear madam," returned he. "Words are unnecessary; indeed they are. I read in your face that gratitude which a generous mind is so prompt to pay with usurious interest."

She smiled and shook her head. "As you please," said she. "True courage, it is said, always makes light of its own acts; but when we left you yesterday at Mr. Carstairs' house, you were scarcely recovered. I trust you are now yourself again."

"Unhappily, madam, yes;" here he released her hand, and sighed. "They tell me I was under water a few seconds longer than yourself and your cousin; otherwise a great hulking fellow like me ought to be ashamed of himself to have been the last to get his breath."

"And your horse, Mr. Carlyon,—I trust that noble horse has come safe to land?"

"He is standing in your stables at this moment. If I could but let him know that you had asked after him, I am sure that Red Berild would be better pleased than with a

feed of corn. His nature is chivalric—except," added Carlyon, smiling, "that he never earns the spurs."

"I have had another visitor this morning, Mr. Carlyon, to whom, next to yourself, Richard and I are indebted for our preservation yesterday; and for fear I should forget it, I will tell you at once that I have a favour to ask you in connection with him. When one owes one's life to a fellow creature, it does not matter what one owes beside; the weight of obligation cannot be increased; so you see I am quite shameless."

"Whatever the favour may be, it is granted, my dear Miss Crawford. You speak of William Millet, I suppose, whom I have just met upon the road."

"Then he probably asked you himself?" said Agnes, eagerly.

"No; although, of course, I would have

obliged him in any way. But he is very modest, is William."

"Very modest and very good," replied Miss Crawford, thoughtfully. "I don't know anyone *so* good in all Mellor."

"He does not seem a happy man, however; at least, he has always a melancholy go-to-meeting sort of air about him." There was the shadow of a sneer upon this last sentence, cast by the speaker's self-contempt, not contempt of his subject. Carlyon felt that he was in danger of playing a hypocritical part to please this beautiful girl, and he resented his own weakness.

"If William Millet has sorrows," replied Agnes, confidently, "they are not his own. His heart, like the pelican's breast, bleeds for others, not for himself."

"Yes; he has a worthless, drunken father,

poor fellow," said Carlyon, abruptly; "that must be a bitter bane to any man."

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Carlyon; you and I cannot know how bitter. I say *you* from hearsay only; but if what everybody agrees in must needs be true, you were exceptionally blessed in your father."

"He was a man of the strictest religion and piety," returned Carlyon.

The extreme coldness of his tone could scarcely have escaped her,—and indeed it was intended to be observed,—but she went on as though she had not heard it.

"In that case you ought to feel pity for those who are less fortunate in their parents."

"I do pity William Millet, Miss Crawford. If you ask me to pity Stephen, a man who for a glass of gin has put a life like yours, to say nothing of your cousin's and mine, in deadliest peril, I cannot do it."

"I ask you to forgive him," said Agnes, pleadingly.

"William has asked me to do that already, and I have done it. I have promised also to try my best to get the old man forgiven, although that will be no easy task in Mellor, where, if you had perished, they tell me every household would have lost its truest friend."

"No, sir, no," said Agnes, hastily; "poor folks are thankful for small kindnesses, and magnify them in their talk. But to *this* household—that is, to my poor father—my loss would have been doubtless great. The very nearness of such a calamity (for such it would have doubtless been to him) affected him very deeply; he showed himself far from well at Woodlees yesterday, Richard tells me."

"Yes, he was twice overcome, although I did not understand the cause; but at your father's age there is nothing surprising in

such seizures, particularly since he has been such an invalid so long."

"Just so," said Agnes, in low earnest tones; "there is nothing surprising. You will not be disturbed therefore, if, when you come to see us, as he hopes you often will, he should occasionally give way in a similar manner. I am afraid he is scarcely well enough to see you to-day, although I know he counts upon the pleasure of your dining here on Thursday—indeed, I had, at his request, written you this formal invitation—which, as you see, only awaits the postman."

"I accept it very gladly," said Carlyon; "notwithstanding which, oblige me by not tearing up the note. It will remind me—although, indeed, I am not likely to forget it—of the engagement. Do you always act as your father's amanuensis then, Miss Crawford?"

"Always: I have done so for some years. Even his business matters—except just where his signature is necessary—are entirely transacted by me. You smile, as though you doubted my fitness for such a post; but, I assure you, I am very exact and methodical."

"Nay, I was only envying the attorney whom Mr. Crawford employs," said Carlyon, simply. Tone and gesture were both wanting, which should have accompanied a compliment so highflown. The young girl blushed deeply, and there ensued an embarrassing pause.

"That drawing of yours reminds me," resumed Carlyon, pointing to the table, "of the pretext on which I have ventured to intrude upon you. This sketch-book was found upon the sands this morning, as well as a camp-stool, which the finder will bring with him before night; it is yours, I conclude, although I am afraid it can be of no further use."

Miss Crawford looked very grave at the sight of this memento of her late peril. "I thank you much, Mr. Carlyon. It is useless, as you say, for its original purpose; but I am very glad to have it. It will serve to remind me of the Providence which mercifully preserved me in so terrible a strait; as well," added she, with frankness, "of the brave gentleman who risked his life—nay, almost lost it—to save that of mere strangers. My unfinished sketch, I perceive"—here her voice faltered in spite of her utmost efforts at self-command—"has vanished from the block. Surely the sea could not have taken all the colour out."

"I assure you, dear Miss Crawford, on my honour," exclaimed Carlyon earnestly, "that *I* have ventured to take no such liberty. The book is just as it came into my hands."

"Nay, there would have been no great

harm," returned she, smiling, "even had you committed such a theft. The wrecker, I am afraid, whoever he is, will have gained but a worthless prize."

"There I differ from you," said Carlyon. "I never before properly appreciated my manorial rights to Flottsam and Jettsam: I will punish the rascal who has thus deprived me of them with all the rigour of the law—that is, I would if I could. From whence is the sketch taken which you have just finished so charmingly? I should know those hills well enough: that is Wynthrop Pike, is it not? and that Cold Harbour Dod?"

"No, the Dod is here, in the middle distance; although I daresay it is my fault that it is not recognisable. It is taken half way up the crags; a most glorious place for a view. Come, I will show you the very spot."

"I should like that of all things," answered

Carlyon, eagerly. "Greycrags has been so well preserved a sanctuary since your father's time, that I have quite forgotten the view from your hill."

She took up the summer hat that lay on the chair beside her, and, with the drawing in her hand, stepped out through the open window on the lawn, which sloped up to the wood-crowned height to southward. Two winding walks, to left and right, led to the top of this hill; and both of them had several little level resting-places, or plateaux, provided with seats either for rest or enjoyment of the extensive prospect afforded from them. On one of these, which commanded the windows of the drawing-room they had just left, Richard Crawford was seated reading, or, at least, with a book in his hand. He did not seem to observe Carlyon and his cousin. He had taken up his position on the left-hand

walk; and when the point was reached where the two diverged, Agnes, after a moment's hesitation, took the other.

That, certainly, was a fair spot from which the good folks of Mellor had been shut out by Mr. Crawford's veto years ago. Art and nature seemed to have vied with one another in adorning the scene. The luxuriance of the wilderness predominated; for Mr. Crawford's out-door establishment was scarcely sufficient to keep in order such extensive grounds; but still the lawn, on which you looked down at every turn of the shady zigzag, was kept smooth and shaven, and the flower-beds in their emerald setting glowed with harmonious hues. A terrace-walk—now diminished to a strip of gravel—ran round the house, and this was set with urns full of scarlet blossom. As they moved higher, above the level of the house-roof, the prospect to the north-west, to

which we have alluded, began to expand itself, and for the spectators an alcove had been erected at the most eligible point of view.

"This is the place from which I took this drawing, Mr. Carlyon," said Agnes; "and I think you owe me an apology for mistaking Windy Scar, yonder, for Cold Harbour Dod, whose hump, I flatter myself, I have represented with great fidelity. I have always been taught to prefer truth to beauty, independently of the fact that the former is always attainable, and the latter not."

"The poet tells us they are the same," answered Carlyon, "'Beauty is truth—truth, beauty;' and when I look at *your* face, Miss Crawford, I do believe him."

"Mr. Carlyon, I am not used to listen to compliments," said Agnes, rising from the bench with quiet dignity; "and, to tell you

the truth—or the beauty, since you say the terms are synonymous—it is a taste which I do not wish to acquire."

"You altogether misconceive my unfortunate observation, dear Miss Crawford," replied Carlyon, humbly; "but pray sit down. I will take care not to offend again, even in appearance. You make light of my poet's dogma, it appears; I hope you do not flout at *all* bards, as Meg—that is, Mrs. Newman—does. A painter like yourself should surely be on friendly terms with the sister-art."

"I like poetry very much, Mr. Carlyon; but I must confess—making all allowance for my own lack of intelligence—that the claims which its admirers often put forth are somewhat extravagant. Poets seem to me to be the most thoughtful and suggestive of writers, touching with marvellous skill the innermost

chords of our being; but as high-priests of our spiritual life I do not recognise their authority."

"You do not believe in the inspiration of the muse, then?"

"Yes, I do; but not in the same sense in which I believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures."

"Plenary?" asked Mr. Carlyon, smiling. "You surely don't believe, with Mr. Job Salver, that the Bible was dropped from Heaven in a lump, and in the vulgar tongue?"

"Oh, sir, I am an ignorant girl, and know nothing of what you hint at. But this I know, that when folks want comfort on their sick-beds, they only get it from one book."

"You are speaking of uneducated, simple people, such as you find about here."

"Yes; or in other words, of about nine-

teen-twentieths of our fellow creatures. Of the other twentieth—the educated classes—about one twentieth again, perhaps, have really any genuine poetic feeling. Thus the influence of the poets, however powerful, is restricted within very narrow limits. It is idle to speak of them as supplying the spiritual place of those inspired writers who address themselves to every degree of mankind."

"My dear Miss Crawford," returned Carlyon, laughing, "if it be possible that Doctor Samuel Johnson has been permitted to reappear upon the earth's surface in the form of a fair lady, she is certainly before me now. You make me believe in the doctrine of metempsychosis."

"I wish I could make you believe in something better and truer," returned the young girl, gravely.

"Well, try. I should like you to have as good an opinion of me as you have of William Millet."

"Nay, sir, but that is impossible."

"Dear me," quoth Carlyon; "why this is worse measure than I should get from Mr. Puce himself. Surely he would estimate the Squire of Mellor above a cockler's son."

"Do you suppose, Mr. Carlyon, that God Almighty, who made the whole world, and ten thousand other worlds for all we know, cares whether a man is a king or a cockler?"

"No, Miss Crawford; nor, indeed, do I care, either. You are wasting your energies in preaching equality to one of 'the Mountain' like me."

"And yet I see a pride in this very humility of yours, Mr. Carlyon. Every man is equal, you say. You bend to no one, and

you wish the humblest to treat you as man with man. And yet you are aware of your own superiority to the rest. When you rode down yesterday 'into the jaws of Death——'"

"'Into the mouth of Hell,'" interrupted Carlyon, finishing the quotation.

"Nay, I do not say that; God in his mercy forbid!" continued Agnes, fervently; "but when you saw yourself to be the only man of all that concourse upon the shore who would peril his life to save that of others, you must have known that you were braver, nobler, more generous than other men. Oh, sir, it is not well, I know, to say such things to your face; I see it embarrasses your nature to hear them; yet it is my duty to speak. Courage is good; but that is not courage which in the favoured servant leads him to defy his master to whose forbearance

he is indebted; that is not courage, but an ungrateful audacity, which moves a man to defy his God."

"Miss Crawford," returned Carlyon, slowly, "I thank you. I am not so wilfully blind but that I can perceive you mean to do me a good service. We will talk of these things some other time together, as procrastinating Festus said to Paul. My visit to Greycrags has already been unconscionably long; in remembrance of it, however,—especially of this interview,—may I beg for that chalk drawing, that admirable half-length of my old friend, Cold Harbour Dod. Come, or else I shall think you vexed because your eloquence has not converted me upon the instant. You know it is quite the custom for those who would gain spiritual proselytes to bestow material advantages. 'Come to church, and you will get coals and blankets at

Christmas,' says Mr. Puce to the disciples of Job Salver."

"As you will," said Agnes, sighing; "but you are very welcome to my poor drawing, sir."

Her cheeks were pale, the light which had glowed in her earnest eyes awhile ago had quite gone out. Carlyon, on the other hand, looked flushed and pleased. He rolled up the little sketch with tenderest care, and placed it in his breast pocket.

"I will make a frame for it with my own hands," cried he, joyfully; "no carver and gilder shall touch it. Like the good old emperor of old, you may say to yourself, Miss Crawford, that you have not misspent this day, since you have made a fellow-creature happy."

Agnes did not reply. Slowly, and in a silence broken only by one or two conventional phrases, the two descended the hill.

Richard had deserted his bench, and was nowhere to be seen. When they reached the drawing-room, and the horse had been ordered to be brought round,—

"I must go out and see Red Berild!" exclaimed Agnes.

"Ah, do so," said Carlyon; "although he never looks so well, so powerful, and yet so gentle, as when he is carrying a lady."

So she went out to where the noble creature stood, pawing the gravel, and patted his arching neck approvingly, and whispered in his pricking ears how grateful she felt to him.

"On Thursday, we shall see you at dinner, Mr. Carlyon," were her last words.

"Without fail," answered he, with a warmth that contrasted with her quiet tones; and so they shook hands and parted.

Rapt in happy thought, and ever and anon

touching his breast pocket as though to assure himself that his treasure was safe, Carlyon rode slowly away; and when he and his steed had come to a retired part of the road, and out of eyeshot of the house, he leaned forward and kissed that neck upon which Agnes Crawford's hand had lingered so lovingly.

CHAPTER X.

CUBRA'S TEACHING.

When Agnes returned to the drawing-room, having bid adieu to her guest, she did what was with her a very unusual thing indeed,—that is, nothing. Instead of working, or reading, or drawing, or attending to matters of the house, she sat in her old seat, with her hands on her lap, looking thoughtfully out upon the flower-bordered lawn, but only seeing the pictures in her brain. How long she might have thus remained in dreamland it is impossible to say, for that locality, seductive to all, is particularly so to those who, like her, are comparatively strangers to it, and find themselves there only

occasionally; she was soon startled into consciousness, however, by some one moving in another part of the room which lay in shadow.

"Richard!" cried she, in astonishment. "What, are *you* here?"

"Yes, Agnes. I would not have disturbed you if I could have helped it; but I got the cramp and was obliged to move a limb."

"You frightened me very much, Richard," replied she, with a touch of annoyance in her tone. "Why did you not speak?"

"Because I had nothing to say which would be pleasant to you, or at least one-half as pleasant as the thoughts which are occupying your mind."

"You cannot have read them, Richard, very correctly, if that is the conclusion you have arrived at."

"Yes, I have, Agnes. I can tell you what you have been dreaming of, for it *is* a dream

which can never have any reality, thank God! You have been dreaming of converting John Carlyon—into a husband."

"Richard!" She had risen to her full height, with flashing eyes and flaming cheeks. "How dare you insult me thus—you that are my own kith and kin! I blush for you."

"No, you are blushing for yourself, Agnes. You have seen this man but for an hour or so, and yet the mention of his name turns you scarlet. I saw you when you stepped out with him yonder on the lawn together. You both looked up to where I sat, and then he asked you a question. An inner sense told me what it was as surely as though it had been whispered in my ears. You said that though my manner might have struck him as strange, that I meant no harm. That you really had a great regard for me, being

your cousin, and lest he, Mr. Carlyon, should misjudge me, you would confide to him at once that I had had a sunstroke in Barbados."

"Heaven is my witness, Richard," interrupted Agnes, earnestly, "that I never uttered one syllable of all this; that even the idea of uttering it never entered into my mind. You will believe my word, Richard, I suppose, in opposition to this inner sense you speak of. Oh! cousin, cousin, for shame."

"How gentle and kind you are with me in consideration of my infirmity!" observed the young man, bitterly. "I dare say you have made up your mind that there shall always be an asylum for me in your own home—that is, if *he* has no objection—when you are married and settled."

He thought she would have flamed up

again at this, but her face was now still and pale. Her large eyes gazed upon him in wonder and in sorrow. His fiery dart was turned aside by the shield of pity.

"Yes, you can afford to be patient and forbearing," he went on; "or at least you think you can; though do not be too sure."

A speck of colour came into each fair cheek, then vanished instantly as a spark; but her eyes, suddenly stern, retained their firmness.

"I do not wish to threaten you, Agnes."

"Threaten *me!*" Unutterable scorn never took a more graceful shape than in that face and form. "You are mad, Richard."

"No—not mad, but wounded, vexed; that I allow, Agnes. Forgive me. I will school myself to better manners. Why did this man come hither? Why did he ask for *you*, not for your father? Why, as though this

room was not sufficiently private for him, did he lead you to yonder arbour?"

"I deny your right, Richard, to ask any such questions; but they are easily answered, thus: Mr. Carlyon came to return me this sketch-book left on the sands on the day when he saved your life and mine. My father has not quitted his room, and therefore could not see him. It was I myself who proposed to take Mr. Carlyon up the hill."

"Good. The rest I know. He asked you for your drawing, and you gave it to him, and he said you had made him happy. I was behind the alcove and heard it all."

"What! *you* played the eavesdropper!"

He had approached her, but she waved him off with a gesture of supreme contempt.

"If you were a poor man, sir, I tell you what you would have been—you would have been a thief!"

"We do not despise the man—the Bible says it—who steals for bread," replied the young man, passionately. "*I* starve, and therefore steal. You, Agnes, are to me the bread for which I hunger; the fire for lack of which my blood runs cold; the drink I thirst for; the atmosphere in which alone I breathe. Oh, listen to me—listen to me, if you have a heart not stone."

He cast himself before her on his knees, and clasped her dress, for she was about to leave the room in terror at his words.

"You are all I have to live for—all. I love you as no woman ever yet was loved. Look you, you have given that man a drawing, and he says that he will prize it; but not as I prize this, although it was no gift at all. I tore it from your sketch-book yesterday, when I thought we had but a few minutes to live. So dear even then was

everything belonging to you. I wish we had both died together. Not I alone, for then you would have married this man—which you never shall—no, *never*. Yes, I had rather see you angered thus than pitiful. You never shall."

"Richard!"

"Nay, Agnes, do not look like that—I then feel without heart or hope. Oh! pity me."

From menace to appeal, from love to hate, his mood thus shifted; yet all his face was bright with changeful beauty, like some Eolian harp, whose strings obey the tempest or the whispering summer wind as happens, but harmonious to each. Now he lay prostrate on the floor with his face hidden in his hands, and to judge by the movement of his shoulders, sobbing with hysterical violence.

"For shame, Richard! That is not the behaviour of a man, but of a spoiled child denied some plaything of which, if it were given him, he would tire in a little time and fret for something else. I cannot stay, and will not, to see you thus conduct yourself. I will send Cubra to you, for I am sure you must need a nurse."

Thoroughly roused to wrath, Agnes disengaged her dress from his now yielding fingers, and left the room. The young man, moaning in a restless manner, like some wild beast in pain, lay where he was.

"What, Master Richard ill again? What have they been doing to my darling?" cried a female voice, speaking with great rapidity, and in broken English. Then followed a torrent of Hindostanee. "Get up, my own, lest the sahib come in and find you thus."

He looked up with an angry scowl. "Let him come, Cubra; I know now how to deal with him. Let him take care."

"Hush, hush! The wise snake gives no rattle. Has Miss Agnes made you angry? She is always doing that."

"No, Cubra, no," replied the young man, rising to his feet, and giving the old black woman his hand, which she covered with kisses; "it is I who was in fault. You must not be vexed with Agnes."

"What! when she does not love my Richard?" She shook her head, its hair more intensely black even than that of her young master, though by a score of years his elder, and her eyes gleamed white with wrath. "No, no. Why not she love you, my beautiful? It is she who should lie there and say, 'Kiss me, Richard, be my husband, be my master.' Tell me how she help it."

"She cares nothing for me; nobody cares for me, except you, Cubra. And what is worse, she loves another man."

"She—love—another—man!" echoed the ayah; first in profound wonder, and then with malignant ferocity. "She love another man. Take Cubra's knife—this one she killed the dog with years ago, that kept my pet awake o' nights with its yelping. Take it and kill him. If Massa Richard is afraid, shall Cubra do it?"

"Certainly not. Never hint at such a thing again, I beg. Throw that knife away. It would be very wrong, very wicked, and would displease me very much indeed, Cubra."

"I always please Master Richard, not make him sorry," returned the black woman, quietly. "What shall we do, then? kill *her?*"

"Murderess!" cried the young man, with fury, seizing the ayah by the throat. "Give utterance to that devilish thought again, and I will choke you. Touch my Agnes, injure one shining hair of her bright head, and I would——ugh, you black savage!"

Richard let go his hold and shuddered. The application of the homœopathic principle of like to like, passion to passion, for the time at least, had cured him. The exhibition of such instincts in another had made him sensible of his own unreasonable conduct.

He passed out on the lawn and up to the alcove which Carlyon and Agnes had lately occupied. There he sat alone, watched by the eyes of Cubra from below, exactly as a man in some trouble, beyond canine sagacity to comprehend, is watched by his faithful dog.

The ayah had been Richard's foster-mother, although not in India. For some reason, best known to Mr. Crawford, the place of the black nurse in whose care he had been brought home had been supplied by Cubra directly the vessel arrived in England; but she loved him as though he had been her charge and comfort from the first. Great and wondrous is the affection which women often evince for the little ones who are indebted to them not for the gift of life, but only for the prolongation of it; but in Cubra's case, this feeling was devotion; nay, idolatry. Without friends, without relatives, without country, without a God, this poor, ignorant creature had found a substitute for them all in Richard Crawford. She was ready to shed her heart's blood for him, and she had given him all that she had to give him, short of that. Some of her gifts had better never have been bestowed. He had

inherited from her the vehement passions of her Eastern race, not mitigated, and scarcely skinned over by her long contact with the civilised world. His education, such as it was, had done him but little service. His uncle, moody, and at times morose, had never taken kindly to the boy, although he had always done his duty by him in what is falsely termed "essentials," that is, in material requirements. He had not spared money (the child had inherited but very little from his own parents) and had sent him to a respectable school. He had then offered to give him a fair start in any profession, save one, to which he might take a fancy. And here occurred the first considerable breach between the boy and his guardian. Richard had that vehement longing to enter the navy which sometimes seizes upon our insular youth with an intensity not to be explained, and upon

which as a nation we may well congratulate ourselves, but not always as parents and guardians. Mr. Crawford entertained a repugnance for the sea quite as great and as unaccountable as was his nephew's predilection for it. The contest was very violent, and bore bitter fruit. So far as the subject of dispute was concerned, Richard gained his point, inasmuch as he was sent afloat, but instead of being admitted into the Royal Navy, he entered the Merchant Service. His uncle never forgave him his obstinacy, and his own proud spirit deeply resented the being placed in what he considered an inferior branch of his beloved calling.

At the time of his departure on his first voyage—which proved a long one—and just before Mr. Crawford's removal to Mellor, a second ground of offence had arisen. The boy had fallen in love with his cousin—if

one of his rash and impetuous nature could be said to fall, and not rather to have leapt headlong over the icy barrier of kinship into the fiery gulf of love. The passion of a youth of sixteen for a girl one year his junior is not generally a very dangerous matter, and especially when there is no sign of its being returned; but it naturally intensified his uncle's prejudice against him, at the same time as it probably forwarded his own views in the matter of his being sent to sea. After an absence of a year or two on the salt water, it was reasonably to be expected that such a cobweb would be blown away from his young brain; and no serious talk had ever been held with him upon the point. Yet now, after being away from the beloved object for no less than five years, the young man had returned home more enamoured of her than ever. He had only been at Greycrags for a

few weeks, and, as we have seen, he had already addressed his cousin in the terms of a passionate lover; and yet the duration of his stay at home was indefinite. This was a state of things the suspicion of which might have aroused the anxiety of any father. Mr. Crawford, however, was not ignorant of the relative position which the two cousins occupied. Not only was he confident of the dutifulness of his daughter, but the sisterly affection which she had at all times manifested towards Richard was evidence to the shrewd old man of her not reciprocating any warmer feeling. She had interceded for him with her father, a hundred times, but never when the favour sought would have been to the lad's hurt, albeit to his gratification. She had shown none of the blind fondness of one who loves, and none of the reticence. Mr. Crawford knew from her own lips that

his nephew had offered her his hand, and been refused. She had confided it to him upon the understanding that poor Richard was to be treated none the worse for all that had come and gone. It was, doubtless, owing to this proviso that the young sailor owed the toleration which he enjoyed at Greycrags from his host and kinsman, notwithstanding his audacious aspirations.

Although accepting his position, Richard was by no means grateful for the sufferance. He knew, or thought he knew, that he possessed a claim upon the hospitality of Greycrags, nay, upon the possession of Agnes Crawford for his wife, that only required to be put forward to be allowed; a claim basely acquired, indeed, and base for a man to use, —but still a valid one. Of the game he felt himself certain; whether it was to be obtained by honest play, or by the card

which he kept in his sleeve, was the question that now agitated him as he sat in the alcove, endeavouring to nerve himself for the cheat's device by thinking how willingly she had lately sat there by another's side. It was not an easy task; for the young man, although unprincipled and reckless, was not a coward, as we have already seen. He had stooped to at least one meanness, beside that with which we are acquainted: but it was not his nature to be mean. The strength of his master-passion had overthrown all barriers of honour and good faith that interposed themselves to its current, and was now threatening to whelm his whole moral being. Out of the course of this stream there was much good ground and fertile; but, curiously enough, in pursuit of one of the purest objects human heart could desire, his own was indurating and being debased, just as the diamond-seeker

burrows in the depths of the mine, or the modern Prometheus seeks the photographic fire with covered face.

"It is only a little less base than Cubra's knife," muttered Richard to himself, after much reflection. "She might hate me for using such a weapon, even though she became my wife. No, no: it cannot be that she will always reject such love as mine. I was wrong to show myself so jealous of the visit of this stranger, although I can see how the old man favours him. Oh, Agnes, Agnes!" exclaimed he, passionately, as with a fervent and almost frenzied gaze, like some fire-worshipper in presence of his divinity, he gazed upon the western hills, now smitten with flame, "if I could only win you fairly, my beloved one!" Then, as he turned to descend, and his eye fell upon Cubra, still keeping her patient watch below, he added,

"but fairly or not, Agnes Crawford,"—and there was a bitter sneer in the tone in which he pronounced her name,—"you *shall* be won, and that soon."

CHAPTER XI.

A LITTLE DINNER AT GREYCRAGS.

The institution of dinner parties, admirable for mankind in many respects, and certainly superior to all other forms of entertainment, is not so advantageous with regard to our relations with the other sex. Man can have no better opportunity of cultivating acquaintance with his brother man, but scarcely a worse for improving his position with the lady of his affections. We may not be so fastidious as the noble bard who "hated to see a woman eat," but we still must acknowledge that we had rather see our beloved object doing almost anything else. We do not know how it may be with chopsticks, but

a knife and fork in woman's hands seem certainly inimical to the tender passion; the jingle of glasses, the clatter of plates, are not to be trusted to, as in any degree permanent; servants are not invariably noisy; and just as, under cover of a fusillade of this sort, you have hazarded a remark with meaning, a sudden silence may place you in the most embarrassing position. The attentive fair one poising a morsel upon her fork, presents a truly ridiculous spectacle, and you—with the sentence you dare not finish—how foolish *you* also look, as you plunge madly at your champagne glass, and wish it were an opaque pitcher in which you could hide your diminished head. And yet, how you counted beforehand on that evening when you knew you were to meet her, and that your good-natured hostess would see that your Arabella should be placed under your charge in the

procession to the dining-room! For my part, I think the Eastern custom, which excludes females from feasts, is a most excellent one. The only exception should be pic-nics, which, indeed, would never exist except for women, who care not what they eat, or what they drink, but only wherewithal they shall be clothed.

However, as I have said, the lover still looks forward to the repast at which he is to meet his fair one, notwithstanding the not unrecorded experiences of the generations before him: and the Thursday on which John Carlyon was invited to Greycrags, seemed to beckon him to bliss.

His late interview with Agnes had filled his heart with hope—it must be confessed on but slight grounds. He did not take into account the depth of gratitude which she felt for the service he had rendered her, and which, of course, had placed him upon quite

another footing than that of a stranger making his first visit of ceremony; the unconventional simplicity of her nature, too, so different from that of young ladies in general, gave to her manners a frankness and cordiality which he had construed, somewhat egotistically perhaps, into a liking for himself. But, he was at all events certain that she did not shrink from him as he had apprehended would have been the case, in pious horror. He did not at all dislike her remarks to him upon the question of religion. They evinced an interest in his future welfare, which perhaps might be extended to the present. Charity begins at home, but love may begin anywhere. Marriages themselves were said to be made in heaven. It was very foolish of him to leap to these conclusions; but the fact was, Carlyon was dealing with a person whose motives of action he could appreciate, and yet

by no means understand. Nothing is more unintelligible to an irreligious man than the position of the truly pious. The quoters of texts, the wearers of long faces, the denouncers of fiction, the foes of the Pope, and all that rout of the vulgar and ignorant who make up so large a portion of what is called "the religious world," are very transparent to him, and afford him endless opportunities of scoffing at the Great Cause of which these foolish persons imagine themselves to be the advocates. But, brought face to face with those who spend their lives in doing good, from motives quite other than those of simple benevolence, and whose charity is of the heart as well as the hand, he is puzzled how to treat them. These "amiable enthusiasts," who show their faith by their works, are very embarrassing to him; but they are seldom met with in society.

Carlyon had long regarded Agnes like some star set far above him in a heaven of its own; but now that he had been admitted to her presence, and listened to her opinions, she seemed no longer out of his reach. Yet as soon might he imagine that the substance of the star was any nearer to him, because in some tranquil pool he had seen its reflex, and hung over it for a little unrebuked.

It is sad to think how soon with ordinary men, and especially with those who pay a somewhat exceptional homage to women, the angel is lost in the wife, and the wife in the drudge; how lightly they value the prize once so humbly sought when they have become possessed of it. With one of Carlyon's generous and knightly nature such degradation was impossible, but he was not without some share of that vanity of his sex which translates the pressure of a woman's hand into

"Persevere," and her smile into "You will succeed." A week ago, had his heart ventured to whisper to him that Agnes Crawford might some day be his, he would have laughed aloud for very bitterness. But now, as he was borne towards Greycrags, in the close car of the country, to dine in company with that no longer unapproachable young woman, the idea of such an union was by no means laughable, but eminently practicable and very nice. There was no dinner-party to meet him, of course. Not that there is any difficulty in the country in getting folks to dine with you, for they will cheerfully come six, and even ten miles, to do it in the depth of winter, but simply because Mr. Crawford knew nobody to ask. Mr. Puce, indeed, would have given five pounds (and he was not a recklessly extravagant man either) for an invitation to Greycrags; but Mr. Puce was not

there. Mr. Carstairs was the only guest, besides Carlyon, who was not an inmate of the house.

An apology for this circumstance was tendered by the stately old man, as he welcomed the young squire, who on his part rejoined, most truthfully, that he was glad they were to be so small a company. He might, with equal veracity, have added that at least one of the present party could have been well spared. Mr. Richard Crawford, offensively good-looking and objectionably young, was standing by his cousin's side, and continued there to stand while Carlyon and she shook hands and dilated upon the fineness of the evening —as though June were generally a series of pouring days alternating with snow-storms. It was quite a relief when cheery Mr. Carstairs bustled in late—("When a lady's in the case, my dear sir, and especially under

certain circumstances—ahem—all other things must give place")—and fastened himself upon Mr. Richard, with some startling particulars concerning the right of fishing, which that young gentleman, it seems, had exercised of late in contempt of the lawful authority of Charles, Earl Disney. The doctor, indeed, was just one of those persons whose presence is invaluable in a small company, in which there are discordant elements. A common acquaintance of all, he seemed to be unaware of the existence of any antipathies. He rattled on at dinner from one subject of gossip to another in his good-natured way, insisting especially upon the attention of Richard as being a youth, and one who had never paid him his dues in any other form. In vain the young man replied to him in monosyllables, and never took his eyes off Carlyon and his cousin, who were conversing

in reality innocently enough about ordinary matters; the doctor poured forth his cornucopia of news to the last item, and then took to science.

"By-the-bye, Mr. Richard, ever since I heard you have been to Peru, I have wanted to have a long talk with you about the cinchona plant."

And a long talk he had, lasting through half the repast, during which his unfortunate victim presented the appearance rather of one who was employed in *taking* quinine than of merely conversing about it. Mr. Crawford, senior, threw in a word or two, here and there, evincing considerable knowledge of the subject, but never at sufficient length to extricate his nephew from the discussion and set him at liberty to watch his cousin and her neighbour. If, in short, the whole thing had been planned for the discomfiture of the

young sailor, and for affording his opportunity to Carlyon, the end in view could not have been more successfully attained.

When Agnes had risen and departed, the doctor, exhilarated by social success and some first-rate Madeira, was still the lion of the evening.

"I am glad to see *you* to-night, Mr. Carlyon," said the little man, good-humouredly; "the last time we parted, it was after rather an unpleasant discussion; but forgive and forget is my motto, as I am sure it is yours. And I am glad to see you *here*, sir, especially, where you will find precept and example too —for, if your excellent daughter, Mr. Crawford, does not convert him from his errors, neither would one who rose from the dead; that's my opinion."

"I too am extremely glad," observed the old gentleman, with a grave smile, "to see

Mr. Carlyon here, although I was not aware that he stood in need of spiritual aid. But for him, sir, my daughter, of whom you are pleased to speak so highly, would not be now alive; nor, indeed, would this young gentleman."

"I have already endeavoured to express my gratitude to Mr. Carlyon," rejoined Richard, stiffly. "Mr. Carstairs, I think I know what you have in your mind, and also in your pocket. I assure you my uncle has no sort of objection to your smoking a cigar."

"None whatever," responded the old gentleman, and the cigars were lighted accordingly.

Carlyon had not thought it possible that any observation of Richard Crawford's could have afforded him so much satisfaction. Armed with the benignant weed he knew

that he would be permitted to dream as he pleased while the doctor talked; that he could conceal his thoughts in grateful silence as easily as he could hide his countenance in the fragrant smoke.

"You are very indulgent, Mr. Crawford," began the little man; "unusually so to us young folks—ahem" (the doctor was on the shady side of fifty); "and you don't smoke yourself, neither, which makes the permission doubly commendable."

"I was so smoke-dried in my—at one time in my life," observed the old gentleman, coldly, "that nothing annoys me in that way."

Mr. Carstairs had it upon the tip of his tongue to say, "That was in the army, I suppose?" but he did not feel quite equal to such an audacity, so helped himself to Madeira instead.

"One thing gives me great comfort," continued the little man; "without which, even with your permission, I should scarcely venture to enjoy myself in this way, and that is, that Miss Agnes has no objection to the smell of smoke. She never asks a poor man to put out his pipe when visiting his cottage, although the tobacco in Mellor is by no means like that of the young squire's here. What a difference there is in tobacco! When we go home together, Carlyon, I shall ask you for one out of your case."

Carlyon laughed, and they all laughed. This little doctor, who had dined and wined so freely, and was enjoying himself so much, was quite a godsend to the company. In the drawing-room after dinner he was still the leading spirit. At the conclusion (and sometimes a little before it) of Agnes' charming Scotch songs he led the applause, clapping his

large hands together, like a dramatic critic of the pit. Once again he informed Carlyon that he was glad to see him in that house, and in such improving company. "Go and talk to her, sir, she will do you good," whispered he, with earnestness. Nor did he fail to give him the opportunity; for fastening vampire-like on the unhappy Richard, he sucked his brains for a quarter of an hour, with reference to the insufficient supply of lime-juice in the merchant service for the prevention of scurvy. In short, Carstairs was the guest of the evening; nay, it was Carstairs' dinner given by Crawford; it was almost Carstairs' daughter by a previous marriage.

Carlyon laughed aloud as he and the little man strode home together that beautiful night —having sent away their respective vehicles —each with one of those excellent cigars of the Woodlees brand in their mouths. He

had not had much private talk with Agnes, but he was indebted to the surgeon for all that he had had. Her last words had been the sweetest. She had expressed a wish to take the portrait of her equine preserver Red Berild. He was to ride the gallant roan to Greycrags for that purpose the very next day. She had said, "any day," and he had replied, "To-morrow," and to-morrow it was to be. It would take a long time and many sittings, (if such a term could be used for such a subject) to paint a horse. He saw no end to his opportunities of visiting Greycrags.

"What a charming evening we have had!" exclaimed he, enthusiastically.

"Very jolly!" answered the surgeon, promptly. "I never enjoyed myself more in my life. Curious young fellow, though, that Mr. Richard; deuced hard to get anything out of him. Wants a deal of pumping.

But when I want to get the truth out of a man, I flatter myself I generally get it—How do you like Miss Agnes?"

"Stop a bit; my cigar's going out. Give me a light, Carstairs."

"No, it isn't. It is in a state of complete combustion. How do you like her, sir?"

"What, Miss Crawford?"

"Well, I don't mean the girl that helped to wait at table; I refer to our late hostess."

"I think she is a very—pleasant—agreeable—and certainly beautiful young woman."

This opinion, given with the utmost deliberation, and much of the conscious solemnity of a judge, seemed to satisfy the inquirer. They walked on for some distance in silence.

"Don't you think that young fellow, Richard, uncommonly handsome, Carlyon?"

"Very," returned the squire, unhesitatingly.

"And so young, too," continued the doctor.

"One cannot wonder that Miss Agnes is obviously weak in that quarter. Did you not notice how quickly she spoke in his behalf when the old gentleman was inclined to take him to task once or twice."

"Yes; she defends everybody; and, besides, as you say, she is doubtless much attached to the lad. They are first cousins, you know."

They walked on in silence as before, except that ever and anon the doctor now stole a look at his unconscious companion, full of embarrassment and pity. His high spirits seemed to have quite deserted him. Carlyon, on the other hand, stepped gaily along, solacing himself, in place of another cigar, with snatches of song, according to his custom when well-content. They were drawing near to Mellor, where they were to part, before Mr. Carstairs spoke again.

"I say, Carlyon, did you observe a very singular thing that took place this evening while we were sitting and smoking in the dining-room?"

"Yes," answered the other, demurely; "I noticed you let Mr. Richard finish one whole sentence without interrupting him; it was a phenomenon no one could fail to observe."

"Pooh! pooh! I don't mean that; those young fellows want to be pulled up now and then. But did you see what old Crawford was doing while we smoked?"

"No; what?"

"Why, he was chewing tobacco. He kept moving the quid about in his mouth whenever he thought he was not observed."

"Nonsense. He was talking; only you would not listen to a word he had to say, so that he might have seemed to you to be only chewing."

"I will stake my existence, Carlyon, that he had a quid in his mouth. Was it not monstrous?"

"I didn't see it; and, therefore, can't say whether it was monstrous or not," rejoined the other, laughing.

"Now, do be serious, Carlyon. I mean, was it not monstrous for a person in Mr. Crawford's assumed position to be doing such a thing?"

"Assumed; why assumed?" inquired the other, sharply.

"Well, that's just the point," pursued the doctor. "Nobody knows who he is, or where he hails from. You have observed, I dare say, how shily he fights off any question about his past history. Well, coupling that peculiar fact with the occupation in which I saw him engaged to-night—putting one and one together, you know—I should be surprised

(notwithstanding Puce's opinion to the contrary) if this strange old gentleman has not sprung from a very low origin."

"Well; and what then?" inquired Carlyon, coolly.

"Well, a good deal *then*, I should think. I mean that this Crawford's relatives and antecedents are probably by no means what they ought to be."

"Yet he seems to me to speak very good grammar," returned the other, laughing. "If, however," added he, more gravely, "you refer to the possibly inferior social position of the ancestors of the gentleman with whom we have just condescended to dine, I honestly tell you I have no sympathy with such prejudices. A man's father may have been a sweep for all I care, so long as the colour is not transmitted (I do stop at colour). And, by-the-bye, did you happen to observe that dusky female who

flitted like a bat up the staircase as we were lighting our cigars in the hall?"

"Yes; that was Cubra, young Mr. Richard's foster-mother. The only servant whom the Crawfords brought with them from the south. She never ails in health, or she might afford me an opportunity for a harmless experiment I have long had in view, in respect to the circulation of the blood. Very interesting subject that, Mr. Carlyon."

"Doubtless, doctor. That reminds me—since you are the medical attendant of Mr. Crawford, might I ask, supposing it is no breach of professional confidence, whether he has anything the matter with his heart?"

The doctor's rubicund face grew almost white; he stopped suddenly. "What, in heaven's name, made you ask that question?" inquired he.

"Simply, because I have seen him start

and change colour in a very curious manner more than once, from apparently inadequate causes."

"No, sir, his heart is as sound as a roach," returned the doctor, abruptly; "I wish I could say as much for all my—patients. Well, I must wish you 'good-night' here, Carlyon."

"Good-night, Carstairs. Don't cut poor Crawford out of your visiting list because you are not sure if his family came in with the Conqueror. Make inquiries; or give him the benefit of the doubt."

Laughing gaily, the young squire strode away up the hill. The churchyard cast no shadow of death upon him to-night as he passed it swiftly by. The moonlight sleeping on the bay had no power to make him sad. When a woman has passed the heyday of her life, she never deceives herself in respect to

that matter, notwithstanding that she may use all her art to deceive others; but with us men it is different. There is an Indian summer in many a man's life; a period always brief indeed, but of uncertain duration, which takes place after youth has fled, and its flight been acknowledged. It is fostered by the sunshine of a woman's love, often only to be nipped by the frost of her indifference. Then winter sets in indeed.

This second summer had suddenly befallen John Carlyon. He had never been in such high spirits, or felt so full of life since the time—a score of years ago—when he was a boy.

"I ought to have told him from the first," mused Mr. Carstairs, gloomily, as he lit the flat candle left for him as usual in his little hall. "My plan for that poor fellow's welfare has sadly miscarried. Instead of her doing

him good she has done him harm. He has fallen in love with her, head over ears. What a *fiasco* have I made of it! All that I have done this evening is to leave an impression upon the company that Robert Augustus Carstairs, M.R.C.S., was exceedingly drunk. Well, I will tell Carlyon to-morrow at all hazards. I was a coward not to do it just now when opportunity offered; but he seemed so full of hope and life, poor fellow, that I had not the heart."

CHAPTER XII.

SKETCHING RED BERILD.

In pursuance of his previous night's resolve the doctor called at Woodlees first in his morning's round; he had taken one foot out of the stirrup, making sure of his man at that early hour, when Robin stopped him with, "The young squire's out, Mr. Carstairs;" then added, in a confidential tone, "he has ridden over to Greycrags." And his old eyes twinkled with unaccustomed mirth. "There mayn't be anything *in* it, you know; I don't say there is," continued he, "but it would be a great thing for the old house, as you remember, in the old times, to have a missus,

and Miss Agnes, by all accounts, is just the one to do him good."

"Yes, Robin, perhaps so," responded the doctor, thoughtfully, not at all astonished by the terms in which the ancient retainer spoke of his young master and his affairs. Carlyon's spiritual case was considered "interesting" by all the orthodox about Mellor, and as many different remedies had been recommended by all classes, as are volunteered for the whooping-cough. "I will call again to-morrow, or the next day."

Day after day went on, and Mr. Carstairs called and called again at Woodlees, but saw nobody but Robin, whose servile smirk was now exchanged for a broad and very unbecoming grin. "I have done my duty," murmured the little doctor to himself, on each occasion; then cantered away, not sorry that his mission had ended where it did, like an

unwilling church-goer who duly presents himself at the sacred edifice and finds there is no room for him.

In the meantime Red Berild—very gradually, for Carlyon, when matters were going too fast, would make critical objections, and cause a whole leg to be rubbed out—was being transferred to paper. He was permitted to come upon the lawn, where he stood, now making futile efforts to crop the short-shaven sward, now advancing towards his master and the fair artist, to complain, perhaps, of the too great efficacy of the grass cutting-machine. Like the French Government when revolution threatens, Agnes always gave him bread upon such occasions which she kept by her in necessarily large quantities for purposes of erasure. The three made a very pretty picture; Agnes sitting upon that camp-stool reclaimed from ocean, Carlyon stretched at

her feet, with his fine face bathed in sunshine; and the great horse champing his bit, as though proudly conscious that he was being handed down to posterity. On the terraced walk, half way up the wooded hill, sat Richard Crawford, always with the same book in his hand, and the same leaf of the book open before him.

At unfrequent intervals Mr. Crawford senior's skeleton form would stalk out of the house, and cast its gaunt shadow over the pre-occupied pair.

"How good it was of Mr. Carlyon to give up his usual gallop on the hill-side, or 'Over Sands,' in order to indulge his daughter's whim in this fashion. What a very magnificent creature—although he (Mr. Crawford) for his part was no horseman, nor a judge of horses—was Red Berild! He did hope so much that Mr. Carlyon would honour his poor

house [lunch being invariably over before the old gentleman put in an appearance], by remaining to dinner."

Thus matters went on—with the exception of the wet days, that are "neither few nor far between" about Mellor, and on which there was no excuse for Carlyon's coming—for weeks. The conversation between him and Agnes had hitherto never centred upon religious matters, since the occasion of his first visit to Greycrags. Each felt that that was the only ground not common to both, and, although one of them most earnestly desired that it should be made so, she shrunk from the contest for fear of its possible result. Not that she had any apprehension for her own firm faith; not that she was without hope of turning his noble soul to the truth; but if she failed to conquer, something told her that they two would have to part; and she

was so happy as things were. Happy always in his presence; but, out of it, when he had gone away no wiser than he came—not bettered, when she had had it in her humble power to better him, or at least to try to do so—her conscience, tender as a rose leaf, was pricked.

"Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke." Had these words been addressed to Timothy only, or to all true professors of the faith? She would repeat them to herself, even while he was speaking to her in his low earnest tones, as though they were a charm against witchery. At last the opportunity long-wished for, long shrunk from, offered itself.

He was speaking of Stephen Millet, now, notwithstanding his late lesson, and vehement protestations of amendment, become even a greater sot than before, and a source

of poverty as well as wretchedness to his son.

"The poor fellow has had to sell his very furniture to support that old scoundrel," said Carlyon. "When I think of William Millet, and of my Lord Disney over yonder, it really almost seems that Providence, in applying the sacred precept of 'Love your enemies,' protects its own foes, while it persecutes its friends."

"That is indeed only seeming, Mr. Carlyon. The happiest man in all this parish, the richest (in all true riches), the wisest, and best, is William. 'Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, of him who prospereth in his way, and bringeth wicked devices to pass.' Nay, do you believe in your inmost heart that such a man as Lord Disney is happy!"

"Most certainly I do, my dear Miss Agnes, in so far as his capabilities permit. He is not

happy in the sense that you are happy, but he is happy enough for him. The middle classes of this country possess just so much religion as to make them uncomfortable. They have too little to constitute happiness, yet too much to permit of them enjoying themselves. Now, the aristocracy, to do them justice, are not restrained from indulging in any pleasure by considerations of its sinfulness. Nor do they lose the respect of society by so doing, for the Bible of the said middle classes is bound up with their *Peerage*, and merely forms a supplement to it, unless when they are at death's door, and the choice has to be abruptly made between their duty to the Lord of Lords, or to persons of title generally. Even the clergy are thus divided in allegiance; or else, like some we wot of, they boldly throw in their lot with the latter, and become, as it were, private chaplains to the hereditary

aristocracy—than which occupation, by-the-bye, in the literal sense, I can fancy nothing queerer. Think of it; Paul accepting the post of private soul-keeper to a nobleman of the neighbourhood: or still worse (since it would be a spiritual sinecure), to one *not* of the neighbourhood! Upon the whole, I must say, for religious folks, that they have the smallest sense of humour, the greatest obtuseness with respect to their own anomalies and contradictions, and, I may add, the least understanding of the principles of their own creed of any people I know. Have not the true faith with respect of persons—the whole chapter is addressed to these idiots; but it might just as well not have been written, we are told, since they grovel at the feet of any fellow-creature, however base, who happens to have a tag to his name. Look at the behaviour of your religious folks about

Mellor, in regard to his lordship, for instance. My sister Meg is almost charitable when she speaks of *his* little peccadillos. Mr. Puce himself dined at the great house last week, in company which I cannot speak of before you."

He spoke with uncommon energy and passion, though never raising his voice beyond its usual tone; his cheeks flushed brightly, his eyes flashed scornful fire. Agnes, on the other hand, grew very white, and her hand, so cold that it could scarcely hold the brush, trembled exceedingly. She felt that the time was come for her to speak.

"This may be very true, Mr. Carlyon," returned she, after a pause, "concerning the professors of the truth—or at least some of them—because, as you say, they are ignorant of the very principles they profess. But if ignorant, why be angry with them? why

scourge them with such terrible words, when they only (as you allow) need teaching? If we do not love our brother whom we have known, how can we love God whom we have not known?"

"Indeed, my dear Miss Agnes," rejoined Carlyon, smiling, "I think there is something wrong about that text, for I am sure I should have a much greater regard for sister Meg, if I had never had the misfortune to know her. Still, as you hint, my expressions were not charitable, and I retract them. Come, you see you are doing me good, reprobate that I am; and, also, please to observe that I might have behaved much worse by railing against religion itself, instead of its professors."

"I cannot go with you there, Mr. Carlyon," replied Agnes, gravely. "I have always held that to speak evil recklessly against our fellow-creatures is worse than to speak blasphemy

against the Most High. We cannot hurt Him by anything we say. He can redress his own wrongs in a terrible fashion; we are very sure of that, although He may not use the thunderbolt upon the instant. But Man, whom He has also bidden men to love, is weak: our words may injure him in reputation—in a thousand ways—nay, they may embitter his very soul."

"And do you say the same of deeds, Miss Agnes, in relation to man and his Creator?"

"Undoubtedly. Can any sacrilege be equal in guilt to an act of oppression, or rather is not oppression the very highest sacrilege against the poor, who are God's peculiar people?"

"Very good and very true," said Carlyon. "Then the sin of unbelief, the intellectual misfortune of not being able to credit the statements of the Bible, you must allow is not

to be compared in point of enormity to the sin of leading a wicked—that is, a cruel and remorseless—life."

Agnes was silent; her heart beat so strongly that she could hear it in that still, sultry noon; she heard the horse cropping the grass; she thought she heard her ever-watchful cousin crumpling the leaves of his book as he leant forward to listen to her reply.

"If faith without works is dead," continued Carlyon, earnestly, "faith with bad works must be surely rotten. Now what I want to know is this—I am not speaking of myself in the matter, for I do nothing to boast of, God knows—but are good works without faith in your opinion valueless, Miss Agnes?"

If he was not speaking of himself, it was, she well knew, of him that she had to speak, when she should answer. There were texts

enough ready to her hand, crushing ones, final ones, such as Mr. Puce would have clapped on quickly enough, like hatches upon a mutinous crew in the Tropics, and yet she hesitated. A harsh and uncharitable dogma from her lips—that is, one that would seem so to this unregenerate man—might do the very mischief it was her intention to avert. He had never given himself the opportunities of grace—what if she should throw away this chance by any spiritual indiscretion, and so through *her* (of all people), *this* soul (of all souls) should perish!

"You say you do not speak of yourself, Mr. Carlyon; but I cannot affect to agree with you—at least, altogether—in that. Is it possible that you have no belief in religion?"

"I do not quite say that," returned Carlyon, frankly; "it is indeed impossible to be

so rank an infidel in the presence of so pure a disciple——"

She stopped him with a reproving finger, and a face very stern and sad.

"Do not trifle with me, Mr. Carlyon; but answer me honestly, and like—if that is all I may adjure you by—and like a gentleman."

"Well, dear lady, I will say this much. Your religion is good for poor folks, I do believe, and admirably adapted for them, although, as I have said, the upper classes can make nothing of it. Your remark about William Millet, for instance, was in my opinion a just one. He comforts himself in the absence of earthly blessings, with dreams of heaven. The weightier his cross here, the richer, he thinks, his crown hereafter. The devout countrymen of our friend Mistress Cubra, who hope to gain Paradise by self-torture, present only an exaggerated phase of

the same superstition. Don't be angry with me, Agnes," added he, pleadingly, tenderly; "don't look like that. I was obliged to be honest with you. You would not have had me tell you a lie."

She shook her head, and her lips moved twice or thrice without sound.

"No," murmured she, presently; "I suppose a lie would have been worse even than what you have said. I am not angry, sir, God knows—I almost wish I were; but I would have given this right hand to have heard you answer differently. The Psalmist says that he never beheld the seed of the righteous begging their bread; but, how much more terrible is this, that the son of a righteous man should deny his God!"

She dropped her head upon her lap, and wept like one who feels she has lost for ever him that is dearest to her.

"Shall I tell you, Miss Crawford," said Carlyon, in an altered voice, not moved by her tears, but cold and bitter in its tone, "shall I tell you how it was I became a heretic?"

"Became, sir! it is not possible that such as you can have once found God and then lost him. And yet I have heard of something of this before; with such a father it could not be but that you were brought up in the right way: and after that to go astray! Alas! alas! 'it is impossible,' it is written, 'if they shall then fall away, to renew them again.'"

The despair in the young girl's face was unspeakable, as though, with those tender eyes, she had herself seen the open door of heaven closed in his face.

"Miss Crawford, I am beyond measure shocked to have caused you such pain; I was

about to say—not in justification, indeed, but in explanation of my opinions, that there had been reasons unguessed at——"

"But with God nothing shall be impossible," murmured Agnes, under her breath; "why did I not think of that before? Yes, yes—I beg your pardon, sir, you were saying——"

"I was about to tell you something that has been a secret between me and the dead for many a year. Promise me to keep it, when you have heard it, as though it had never been told."

"I promise."

"Listen, then."

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW JOHN CARLYON BECAME A HERETIC.

With hesitation and evident reluctance, with his face averted from the listener, and at first hammering the daisy heads upon the lawn with the handle of his riding-whip, John Carlyon began:—

"My father, as no doubt you have heard, Miss Crawford, on all hands, was indeed a constant churchgoer, and he brought me up in the same path. There was no man more respected, although I do not think he was loved, in all this neighbourhood. He not only never offended against the proprieties, but he was a steadfast upholder of them—what is called one of the safeguards of society.

That was the general opinion of him to the day of his death; but it was a mistaken one. He was a hypocrite from first to last; his whole life was one huge lie."

"Mr. Carlyon!" exclaimed Agnes; "you make my blood run cold; not so much by what you say, which seems almost too terrible to be true, but at your manner of saying it."

"When, however, I first found out the truth, young lady, I was more moved than I am now. The student of anatomy faints at his introduction to the dissecting-room; but, after a while, he ceases to shudder at its revelations. He sees what lies behind the velvet cheek of beauty, and the keen eye of wit, but it affects him little. He knows that with all humanity it is the same. He has his advantage over me in that respect. If I could think that behind the veil of religion, the cloak of respectability, the infidel and the

debauchee were inwardly concealed, I should loathe my own father less; but I know there are honest folks in the world. I know that you, Agnes, are as pure as you look, as good as you seem. But this man, that was my own flesh and blood, to whom I owe my being, to whom I was bound by Nature herself to respect and honour—oh, spare me! I cannot bear to speak of it."

"Even a good man may err and give way to strong temptation," whispered Agnes; "yet if he repents——"

"This man did not repent," broke in Carlyon, almost fiercely. "He had nothing to repent of; for in his eyes nothing was sin, nothing was vice, nothing was wrong—unless it was found out. Then indeed he would have been sorry. He was a tyrant, and he broke my mother's heart. I will never forgive him that! She was beautiful, gentle, guile-

less as yourself, and he killed her. She prayed for him upon her deathbed, and he despised her prayer; I do believe that that was the bitterest drop she had to drain in the whole cup of her wretched married life. She made me promise not to tell him what I knew, and not to tell the world. I had to live on with this murderer for years, a participator in his acted lie, and hoodwinked, as he thought, like the rest. He deceived everybody,—yes, everybody—parson, people, neighbours, servants. Robin, at home, believes him to this day to have been the best of men. A tyrant and a libertine, he was yet reckoned the most pious man in Mellor parish. This was the sort of father, Agnes, from whom I learnt how to be religious."

"Mr. Carlyon," returned she, thoughtfully, after a long pause, "are you sure—are you quite sure, that in your great love for such a

mother as you describe, and in your own tenderness of heart, you may not have taken sternness for cruelty?"

He shook his head impatiently.

"Some men," she went on, "not naturally cruel, I have known to be without tenderness of manner, even to those dearest to them; rugged and harsh even when their wives lay a-dying, and yet not heartless."

"No, girl, this man was not rugged. He knew how to frame tenderest words for ears that should have blushed to listen to them. Of some men, it is said, 'we never knew his worth until we lost him;' now *I* never knew how base a father I had got until he came to die."

"Ah! he confessed his sins, and the long catalogue appalled you!" exclaimed Agnes, clasping her hands. "You should thank God for that. Perhaps in that last hour, all was

forgiven him. No one can fathom the infinite depths of Divine mercy. Let us hope, let us pray, that he may have been preserved from that awful state of which he stood in dread."

"Nay, Agnes, we Carlyons have no fear," observed her companion, proudly.

"No fear!" echoed she, in scorn. "What! had this man, living, as you say, a lie, for fear of the opinion of his neighbours, no *fear?* Does cowardice, then, among infidels, solely consist in being afraid of the righteous judgments of God? If so, 'obtuseness with respect to their own anomalies and contradictions' is surely not entirely peculiar to religious people."

Carlyon bit his lip.

"It would surely be the rankest cowardice to be afraid of that in the existence of which one does not believe," said he, evasively.

"The man I speak of died, laughing in his sleeve at the world he had cajoled. He had been a wanderer in many lands, and examined a hundred creeds, only to find one as worthless as another. His god was Self, and he had served him very faithfully. His last advice to me, his only son, was given when the grave was gaping for him: we were alone together, and he upon the sofa that was to be his death-bed, and he knew it; the very room has been hateful to me ever since. He bid me lie like him; be serious and devout; affect the virtues that I had not, for the very vices' sake which they concealed. So should I live a life of ease and yet of dignity, and die with honour, troops of friends, and all the regard that accompanies the close of a life well spent. He would, as it were, have bequeathed me his very mantle of deceit, having no further occasion for it himself, like

some poor conjuror, who teaches his tricks to his children while he lies a-dying, as the best legacy he has to leave them."

"Mr. Carlyon, this is too horrible to be believed," gasped Agnes. "Nature does not permit of such a father. I have seen many death-beds, and when death is claiming us we are often not ourselves; the senses are disordered, the mind wanders; men impute to themselves sins which they have never committed."

"But not this man, Agnes. Do you suppose that I would not believe so if I could; that I have not exhausted every suggestion that could lighten this load which has so weighed down my life? No. He told me the truth at last. He left behind him only too ample corroboration of it. No one is so prudent that he can guard his memory after death. No man, who keeps a

cheque-book, can dare say 'I do not keep a journal;' besides, there were letters that came for him long after he was lying in his grave—but why all this? You know his secret now, which I have hitherto preserved inviolate. Do you wonder that I loathe religion; that 'the very name of Nazarene is wormwood to my Paynim spleen,' and synonymous with all that is false and fair-seeming? That, from the instant that I found myself freed by this man's death from my promise to my mother, I forsook his hypocritical ways and all belonging to them."

"I do not wonder, Mr. Carlyon," said Agnes, sorrowfully; "I do not even say (as others would), why doubt the genuineness of that thing of which you have only witnessed a fraudulent imitation. We are moulded, I know, by the iron force of circumstances—though not all of us. Your mother did not

lose her faith in Heaven because your father had none?"

"My mother? No," answered Carlyon, in hushed and reverent tones.

"She was a Christian woman to the last?"

"She was an angel: to impute wrong to her would be to confuse wrong with right."

"And has the thought of her—of her long-suffering patience, and forgiveness—never moved you towards the faith your father professed, but which she practised?"

"I have sometimes thought there should be an immortality for such as she; that so much goodness ought not surely to be allowed to perish. I have thought so lately of one other person also—of you, Agnes."

"Hush, sir, hush! I am very different from this saint in Heaven. If she had lived,

I cannot but think her love, her teaching, her example, would have won you to her creed, as to herself. You felt better—happier—when you were in her presence, did you not?"

"Yes, I did," replied Carlyon, eagerly; "as I feel when I am in yours. Yes, Agnes,—do not shrink from me; I will do my best—only I will not lie—to learn better things of *you*. Will you teach me, even although I do not promise to learn?"

He looked up in her face for the first time, while she, the heretofore questioner, drooped her eyelids, and a fire burnt in her cheeks.

"Can you not take compassion upon me, even though I am a heretic?" urged he, with tenderness; but she heard him not.

"If any man love not the Lord, let him be anathema, maranatha," were the words which she seemed to hear.

"Go to some wise and holy man," said she, in a faint voice.

"To Mr. Puce?" asked he; "or to whom? No, I shall sit at the feet of this Gamaliel, Agnes Crawford, or of none. I love you with all my heart; nay, I can well believe—so wondrous is the change through all my being—with all my soul. I seem to have another life beyond myself, and if that be my soul, it is you who are its keeper, for to you it flies. Will you be my teacher? Will you be my wife? one word, one 'yes,' will answer both questions." But there came no answer. He could not even read one in her face, for it was hidden in her hand. She was speaking, though her speech was inarticulate, but not to him.

"I know you will never marry—an infidel," said he, slowly.

"Never, never," answered she, with eager-

ness. It was quite a relief to her to get so categorical a question, and one to which she could so unhesitatingly reply.

"Yet you will not reject my—proposition; you will not refuse to afford me an opportunity of being convinced?"

"I cannot say," murmured she; "I must have time, Mr. Carlyon, to think of this. Do not press me for your answer—that is, just now. In your presence, I cannot—I must be alone," added she, hurriedly. "I must ask guidance."

"I venture to think," interrupted Carlyon, respectfully, "that your father will be no obstruction."

Her face flushed from brow to chin. "I was not referring to my father," said she, coldly.

"I trust," returned he, earnestly, "I have not been too bold—not said too much and

too soon. Pardon me, Agnes; do not let the greatness of my love be the cause of my undoing. If my presence is an embarrassment to you, you will write, perhaps?"

"Yes, I will write!" exclaimed she, eagerly; "to-night, to-morrow. It will be better so."

He rose at once and took her hand in his.

"Whatever you may so write, Agnes," said he, slowly, "will be my law. If you decide against me, to having nothing to do with this wicked person, to avoid the touching of pitch, lest even your pure soul may be defiled, I shall understand it. It will be unnecessary to state reasons. The one word 'no' will suffice; I had rather that you wrote nothing more. I will never trouble you again. I shall have turned my back on Paradise for ever. But if—if you think within yourself that I may be won to what you deem the

right—mind, I do not say it is even probable, for I will not use lies to gain Heaven itself—and if won, that you might, in time, even stoop to love me, I shall understand that also, by one word, 'yes.'"

What would he not have given to have touched her white brow with his lips, as she stood close beside him, downcast, thoughtful, with her snow-cold hand in his! It was not because every window, for all that he knew, might have had its watcher, or because her cousin was playing the spy as usual, upon yonder terrace, that Carlyon did not do so. It was not for fear of *them*, that, having raised those fingers midway to his lips, he let them fall again, and turned away in silence, while Red Berild followed, docile, with a hasty farewell crop at the scanty grass. To have kissed her would have been very sweet, but it might have demanded its dread memories for years.

Heavy of heart, the strong man took the road from Greycrags homewards; while his good horse pressing his great nose against his hand, strove vainly to give his master comfort.

Agnes remained standing in her place, deep sunk in thought, till a book fell heavily upon the terrace-walk, and a well-known step began to descend the hill; then, at its first foot-fall, she started from her reverie and hastening in, sought her own chamber, where she remained for hours.

Her mind was torn with antagonistic emotions. She would never marry an unbeliever, that was certain; to that she clung, and reverted to it again and again; it was her sheet-anchor in the storm. But had she not grown to love one? Was she not paltering with her own conscience in this matter? and even with still more sacred things? Did she

honestly believe herself to be a bearer of God's message to those unwilling ears; or was not her strong desire to convert the Sceptic alloyed with a wish to win the Man? Agnes Crawford was not a student of Pope, or she might almost have applied to herself, the self-accusation of Eloisa—

> "E'en then to those dread altars as I drew,
> Not on the cross my eyes were fixed, but you;
> Not Grace nor Zeal, Love only was my call,
> And if I lose thy love I lose my all."

Hour after hour passed by; the luncheon bell rang, but she took no heed: but, late in the afternoon, a knock came to her chamber door, and a voice in mocking tones (or what, perhaps, she fancifully imagined to be so), reached her through the key-hole, saying, "Missie Agnes, you are wanted in the parlour; Mrs. Newman's come, and wish to see you very partickler."

"Mr. Carlyon's sister!" murmured Agnes

to herself, while a sudden pain seemed to shoot through her heart; "why should *she* come here?" But she answered, in her usual firm, clear tones, "Very well, Cubra; tell her I will be down directly."

CHAPTER XIV.

MRS. NEWMAN'S ACT OF CHARITY.

It is not to be supposed that Carlyon's visits to Greycrags passed without notice among the good folks of Mellor. The appetite of that small community for gossip was absolutely insatiable; it was quite a trade with more than one respectable female to make it, and even to invent the materials. So that when a subject for it was found, that could be relied upon as fact, good solid substratum, for all sorts of scandal, the public satisfaction was unbounded. But not in all cases the private. Mrs. Newman, of Mellor Lodge—a place that had been once termed the Priory, but it was not to be supposed that so good a Protestant

would call her residence by *that* name,—was by no means pleased with the reports that reached her from all quarters concerning her brother's proceedings. She had long "washed her hands of him," in a spiritual sense; she had excommunicated him in an almost episcopal manner, by throwing her hands up and shutting her eyes, at solemn conclave over many a tea-table; but she had never shut her eyes to his property, which was entirely at his own disposal. She anticipated with confidence the reversion of Woodlees for herself and Jed, (short and loving for Jedediah,) her son, when its present unworthy occupant should be—elsewhere; for Carlyon was her senior by five years. It was astonishing with what calmness and fortitude this excellent woman reflected upon the future fate—the terrors which she honestly believed to be in store—for so near a relative.

Upon one occasion, while discoursing upon this particular topic, which was a very favourite one with her, she was rebuked by no less a person than the archdeacon of the diocese. For archdeacons, as such, she had no great reverence; but this one happened to be own nephew to my Lord Disney, and she had that admiration for noble birth which supplies the place of such a multitude of other virtues in minds like hers. He bade her not to make too sure of the eternity of the torments of the wicked, and explained to her the doubts entertained by the learned of the literal meaning of the word *αἰώνιος*. "Not," added he, with a benignant smile, "that that much alters matters; for the duration signified doubtless extends to millions and millions of years."

"That is *some* comfort," quoth Mrs. Newman cheerfully, and with a sigh of relief.

But, notwithstanding this opinion of Carlyon's deserts, she had always counted upon his leaving Woodlees and the rest of his property to his own flesh and blood. Not to provide for one's family is (as is well-known) to be worse than an infidel, and Meg had never thought worse of brother John than *that*. Yet, lo! at an age when he might be supposed to have almost escaped the perils of matrimony, here was he visiting Greycrags daily, with a motive that it was easy to guess at. Jedediah, indeed, who was of a frank and open nature, even for eighteen, alluded to it one morning at breakfast in the following terms.

"I say, mother! Uncle John is after that gal at Greycrags—Miss What-d'ye-call-um—Crawford."

"Seeking to ally himself matrimonially with that young woman, Jed? Impossible!"

"Glad you think so," answered Jedediah, gruffly, and filling his mouth with muffin; he was rather gluttonous in his habits, and also a good deal spoilt. If his mother was stern to others, she was not so with him; he had always done as he liked from his childhood, and he had generally liked what was not good for him. He was vicious beyond what she had any suspicion of, and his good-nature was of the sort that only lasts so long as its proprietor is pleased. Mrs. Newman was getting, as all such mothers do in time, a little afraid of her darling son.

"You needn't be cross, Jedediah," said she, quietly; "I was only asking for information. The affairs of this world have, I am thankful to say, no great interest in my eyes, and those who know me do not much trouble me with them. I have, however, heard a rumour of what you speak of, although I have

never suspected anything serious in it. I am not of a suspicious nature, Jed."

"Ah," said the young man, drily—so drily, indeed, that the tone would have suited "Bah" equally well; "I wish for my sake, then, if not for your own, that you'd just look alive and put a stop to it. It's a most disgraceful thing. Why, if uncle marries, there may be a whole kit of children, and then what becomes of those alterations that you are always talking about making when we come into Woodlees?"

Between Mrs. Newman and her brother although their characters, and therefore the expression of their countenances were so different, there was a considerable personal resemblance. Although she did not dress becomingly, and, indeed, wore clothes of a texture much inferior to what is usual with women of her social position, and wore them

threadbare, she always looked a lady; but when annoyed, her thin lips shut together unpleasantly close; her fine blue eyes seemed to harden, and she sniffed like the war-horse that scents the battle, only of course in a lower key. There had been a passage of arms between herself and Jedediah that morning in reference to a scarcity of marmalade at the breakfast table, and he had carried his point and got a new pot. This had given her real pain, as extravagance always did. There were still a few stale strips sticking to the little glass dish, and she would have liked to have seen them eaten before being driven to the preserve cupboard for a fresh supply. Jed had even taunted her, at the height of the discussion, with those prudential habits which her enemies (for the good lady *had* enemies) denominated parsimoniousness, and when she had replied, "Ungrateful boy, it is

only for you I save," he had replied, "It is for *me*, then, that I require some fresh marmalade."

He had taken butter, as well as that costly sweetmeat, with his muffin, on purpose to vex his parent, and had effected his object; and now he was choosing a subject of conversation very ill adapted to give her peace of mind. The relations said to be established between her brother and Miss Crawford were by no means a matter of such indifference to her as she professed. In fact, she had thought of little else from the first moment the rumour had reached her ears; but she had endeavoured to shut her eyes to the full extent of the danger; it was very objectionable to have it brought before her in this inexorable manner, and she sniffed disapproval audibly.

"Yes, I know you don't like it," observed

Jedediah, in reference to this signal; "but it is time to look matters in the face."

"What would you have me do, Jedediah?"

"Well, I'm sure I don't know; she is one of your own sort, this girl, and you ought to be able to stop it somehow. I only know this, that Uncle John is said to be getting on in that quarter uncommonly fast, and the sooner you set about putting a spoke in his wheel the better."

"I shall certainly consider it my duty," said Mrs. Newman, slowly, "to hint to this young lady at the injurious reports that are in circulation respecting her; she cannot surely be aware of the peculiar opinions entertained by your unhappy uncle."

"She is probably aware that he is sweet upon her, and has a good two thousand a year," observed the practical Jedediah.

"No, Jed; I will not think so ill of any young person of religious principles as to suppose she is actuated by sordid motives."

"Bah!" exclaimed Jedediah, this time with a most unmistakeable B. It was rude, but not altogether inexcusable. From the day from which dated one of the boy's earliest but strongest recollections, when his deceased parent had been carried to his long home in a coffin made out of an ancient piano-case (some enemies of the thrifty widow averred that it was too short for him, and that he had been decapitated to suit its dimensions), up to the present hour, when that stale marmalade had been almost foisted upon his reluctant palate, he had been familiar with the sordid devices of at least one saint, and had learnt to suspect them all. Yet singularly enough, while mistrusting the genuineness of the profession of those among whom

his lot was cast, this young man had imbibed their prejudices, and though greatly inclined to vice, was as intolerant of error as Mrs. Newman herself. It was an unspeakable comfort to her to reflect, that although boys would be boys, and you could not put old heads upon young shoulders (this in allusion to some very Bowdlerized edition of Jed's peccadillos which occasionally reached her ears), her Jedediah was a young man of the most excellent principles. For the rest, he was a very handsome young fellow (except for a certain coarseness about the mouth, which it did not need a Lavater to translate), and there was no wonder that his mother was proud of him. Moreover, he was a sensible fellow, after a fashion—what Mr. Carlyle and the vulgar are both agreed to call "knowing" —and she did not despise his blunt but practical utterances.

Nothing more passed between them on the present occasion; their sparring—in which the hitting was all on one side—often ended in that manner; but the force of Jedediah's observations, backed as they were by Mrs. Newman's own secret misgivings, was not lost. She had made up her mind to follow his advice in respect to that peril so imminently impending at Greycrags, but in the meantime she did not neglect her usual precautions in the smaller matters of domestic economy. When her Jed had lounged out of the room to have his pipe in the stable,—for the time had not yet come when he should rule the house and take his narcotic therein,—she locked up the tea and sugar, and having scraped up the old marmalade and mixed it with the new, made a faint mark with her pencil outside the pot exactly at its highest level. Then she descended to the

kitchen, discovered that there were sufficient bones and *débris* left from past meals to make excellent soup, without getting in fresh stock, as recommended by that extravagant hussy, the cook; sniffed violently in the larder over the carcase of a fowl, which did not appear to have so many legs as it ought to have had. "Mr. Jedediah had had *both* broiled for his yesterday's breakfast," said the hussy. "I only saw *one*," said her mistress.

She shook her head when the kitchen-maid demanded another box of lucifer matches.

"How dare you require so many lucifer matches in the summer?" inquired she, as though, during that season, the kitchen-fire might be lighted by a burning-glass. "What is the use of my having that admirable proverb hung over the dresser?" and she pointed to the spot upon the whited wall where "*Waste not, want not*" was inscribed

upon a scroll, not in the illegible high church fashion, but in such a manner that one who roasts might read.

Next she dived into the pantry and delivered to the astonished foot-page—the last of a long, but short-lived line of foot-pages—a lecture upon the use and abuse of plate-powder, with a few remarks upon the pecuniary penalties that await breakage in all well-conducted establishments. After which, ascending noiselessly to the upper regions, she came upon two housemaids making a bed and giggling, to whom she promptly issued a couple of tracts, entitled "The Crackling of Thorns; or, How Anna Thema and Marion Arthur were made to laugh on the other side of their Mouths," with one (practical) illustration.

After thus performing the duties of a diligent mistress, she sat down at her desk, with

a mind relieved of all lesser cares, and free to be concentrated upon the important subject forced upon her notice by Jedediah. Even then her habitual prudence and attention to minute affairs did not desert her; instead of spoiling half-a-dozen sheets of Bath post, as some persons do, who have a letter of difficult composition before them, she selected some waifs and strays of paper, backs of envelopes, and blank spaces at the foot of bills, and thus proceeded to concoct a letter on almost as many surfaces as the Sybil inscribed her oracles. "Dear madam," it began; then "Madam;" then "My Christian friend;" and once—but that she tore up into small pieces as soon as written, and sniffed so that she blew them all about the room—"My dear Miss Crawford."

She was still hanging over "My Christian Friend"—on the blue lines of a butcher's bill

—like a poet in search of an impossible rhyme, when a shrill voice suddenly interrupted her with, "Please, mum, the gardener's wife is a-waitin' for her bonnet."

"You wicked boy," cried she, starting to her feet; "how dare you enter the room without knocking?" and, with that, as if to apply the mnemonical system of association of ideas, she smartly slapped his cheeks. "Tell her to come up; that is, in a minute or two."

The page retired drooping, dogs' eared. Mrs. Newman instantly sought her own apartment, and opening the door of its hanging wardrobe, took from it a faded old summer bonnet, looking like an autumn leaf.

"I've promised it to the woman," mused she, regretfully; "and I suppose I must give it her. And yet it looks almost as good as

new. I am sure I might have had another season's wear out of it."

She gazed at the yellow bonnet-strings which had once been white, with lingering fondness.

"Well, I'll cut off the trimming, at all events; that is quite unsuited to a person in her station of life."

Suiting the action to the word, she regarded the mutilated article of apparel with some approach to resignation.

"There," said she; "the wires are all in shape. She could not have got such a bonnet as that, if it was new, under fifteen shillings. Fifteen shillings," she repeated, very slowly, as though she were reluctantly counting down the money, coin by coin. "That is a very large sum to give away. I think I'll tell her to call again some other time—but then I've done that twice already. How weak it was of

me to promise it to her. How foolishly impulsive I am."

The mirror of the hanging wardrobe before which she stood did not reflect the features which are generally considered indicative of an impulsive character. The pinched-up mouth, the greedy eyes, the fingers clutching tightly at the threatened treasure, would have furnished a study for any painter who wished to symbolise (genteelly) greed. But presently the thin lips straightened themselves into a really pleasant smile, the eyes softened and even twinkled, and the white hand carried its burthen of frail rubbish with a grace. She had thought of a plan to keep her word, and yet not lose her bonnet, or at least her bonnet's worth.

"Well, Mrs. Jones," exclaimed she, with cheerfulness, as she entered the drawing-room, "you see I have brought your bonnet."

It was very necessary to say this. For Mrs. Jones, a delicate nipped-up-looking woman, who had had half-a-dozen more children than was good for her, and was expecting another, regarded the object dangling from her mistress's fingers with considerable embarrassment. Could that wretched, half-stripped thing be the long-promised gift which she had already applied for to its unwilling donor twice in vain? It was no more a bonnet than a skeleton is a man!

But all of us are not in a condition of life to express our genuine sentiments; it is not so easy to be honest and straightforward as gentlemen of "culture" and independent means, who write philosophic leaders in reviews and newspapers, are apt to imagine. People who live by hard work, and have little ones to support, cannot afford to lose their

places; but must be humble and obedient to their masters (and mistresses) in a sense beyond that which (I hope) the Church Catechism contemplates. Thus, Mrs. Jones, the gardener's wife, bethinking herself of those near and dear to her, resisted the temptation of saying, "Where is the bonnet?" and dropped a curtsey before its *simulacrum*. Perhaps the expression of her mistress's face, beaming with conscious benevolence, persuaded her for the moment that the thing was really of some value, and induced her to murmur, "Thank ye, mum."

"I thought you would be pleased, Mrs. Jones," returned the lady, still maintaining her hold upon the article in question. "It will make a very nice bonnet after a little looking to."

Whatever this mysterious process of observation might have implied, the very

mention of it seemed to enhance the value of that with which Mrs. Newman was about to part. "Now mind," she continued, "I don't wish to make a bargain with you, Mrs. Jones, for this is a free gift. A promise is a promise, and you shall have it whether or no."

Here the thing changed hands, and its late proprietress uttered such a sigh as only escapes from one who has resisted a great temptation. "It's your wedding day, is it not, Mrs. Jones?"

"Yes, mum, it be; it is twenty year come this very day that me and my husband have lived together, and a many crosses we have had, and it's been a hard job all along to make both ends meet, but we *do* make 'em, thank God!"

"Very good, and very right; it's a pleasure to hear you say so, Mrs. Jones; and now, I dare say, you have a nice little dinner

to-day—a leg of pork, or a bit of beef, perhaps —about one o'clock."

"Yes, ma'am, thank you, mum, we *ave* got a leg of mutton, although it is not every day as we sees even bacon, far less butcher's meat—"

"Just so," interrupted Mrs. Newman, with one of her sweet smiles; "and you will have no stint of potatoes, for your husband has permission to take as many as he pleases for his own use out of the garden."

"Yes, mum; that was considered in his wages."

But Mrs. Newman went smiling on as though no such remark had been interpolated.

"Now, what I was going to say, Mrs. Jones, was, that if you find the leg of mutton more than you require, one o'clock being my luncheon hour, if you choose to send a nice hot slice, with a few potatoes, between two plates,

—mind, I say if you have lots to spare, and I don't want to put it as any return for the bonnet, (which, indeed, is ridiculous, for that was a very costly article)—I shall be very much obliged to you,—there."

And Mrs. Newman smiled and nodded, and pointed towards the door, as though to preclude all expressions of gratitude upon the part of the gardener's wife, and really looked so lady-like and pleasant, that poor Mrs. Jones retired like one in a dream, doubtful whether she could have heard aright. But before she reached the bottom of the stairs, her doubts were resolved, for a sweet voice called softly to her over the banisters,—

"Let the potatoes be fried, Mrs. Jones, if it is all the same to you; and don't trouble yourself about the pepper and salt, for I don't wish to put you to expenses."

CHAPTER XV.

AGNES AND SISTER MEG.

Doubtless it was with the elastic vigour that characterises the acts of most of us when we have done a good stroke of business in whatever walk of life, that Mrs. Newman reverted to her epistolary labours, after having secured for herself a gratuitous luncheon. Yet none of her compositions seemed to give her satisfaction. But for her forethought in using scraps of paper for her rough draughts, she might have wasted two-penny worth of Bath note.

"I will go and see the girl myself," murmured she, impatiently; "that will be better than writing."

She would have started on the instant, for Mrs. Newman was not a person to let the grass grow under her feet when once a resolution was formed; but she could not bring herself to sacrifice, or, at all events, expose to possible miscarriage and loss, that excellent slice of mutton. And here she made a mistake. It is providentially arranged that very prudent and saving persons shall invariably, at one time or another, miss their mackerel, through an unwillingness to expose their sprat to possible loss; in their exclusive care of the pence the pounds occasionally take to themselves wings; their pin a day secures to them their groat a year, but in picking it up they sometimes neglect more important sources of income. Thus, in waiting for her gratuitous lunch, Mrs. Newman missed her opportunity of putting a stop to that conversation between her brother and Agnes Crawford, which we

have had the privilege of overhearing. If she had started on her mission without waiting for that slice of mutton, she might (to use a culinary metaphor while speaking of a kindred subject) have cooked somebody's goose pretty completely. Imagine the effect of her appearance upon that sunny lawn; its abrupt interruption of the *téte-à-téte;* how she would have frightened the horse, and worried the man, that (would have liked to have) kissed the maiden all forlorn, that lived in the house called Greycrags.

As it was, Mrs. Newman did not start for that retired mansion until 2·30 P.M. She arrived in her basket pony-carriage driven by the small foot-page: like a baleful fairy, who, though drawn by fiery dragons, guided by a duodecimo fiend, reaches the house of the young princess the day *after* her coming-of-age, when it is vain to wish her wall-eyed or

web-footed. But, out of elfland, it is never too late to do mischief.

Agnes had a foreboding that evil was impending when Cubra hissed through the key-hole, "Missis Newman come, and wish to see you very partickler;" nor did her instinct deceive her.

Nothing could be sweeter than the smile with which her guest arose as she entered the drawing-room, and greeted her as a mother might greet a daughter. It was the first time that Mrs. Newman had visited Greycrags since the Crawfords had resided there, and she had a great deal to say about the improvements that had been effected in the meantime. At last she said,—

"What a charming lawn you have, my dear Miss Crawford; but what a pity it is that you allow horses upon it, for surely I see hoof-marks?"

["Ah," thought the speaker, "it's all true. The hussy blushes. It's quite as well I acted upon dear Jed's suggestions."]

"Yes, those are Red Berild's hoof-marks; the horse your brother rode when he saved my cousin and me upon the sands. I wished to take his portrait."

"My brother's portrait?"

"No, madam; Red Berild's." They were looking steadily in one another's faces. Agnes had quite recovered herself. Mrs. Newman felt that no easy task was awaiting her.

"It is all the same," said she, "whether it was the horse or the rider. I am an old woman—that is, comparatively speaking—and you, Miss Crawford, are a very young one. I am quite sure that you are unaware of the consequences—I mean of the construction which must needs be put, nay, which of late *has* been put upon my brother's visits to this

house. In your exceeding innocence—" here Mrs. Newman placed a hand with a darned glove on it upon her young friend's shoulder, and her voice became even tenderer and more winning—"and in your happy ignorance of the ways of the world, you have unwittingly given this wicked creature——"

"The horse, madam?"

"Miss Crawford, I am astonished at you. This levity is most unlooked-for, most unbecoming. I say that you have unwittingly—as I *hope* unwillingly—given this wicked and abandoned man encouragement. I am obliged to speak plainly."

"So it seems, Mrs. Newman, since you call your own brother by such names." She drew herself slowly away, so that her guest's hand, reluctantly slipping, hung by the darned finger tips for a second, and then fell.

"And is it not the truth, Miss Crawford?

Can you pretend to be ignorant that John Carlyon is an infidel? And is not that to be wicked and abandoned?"

"We are all wicked, madam; but we cannot tell whom God has abandoned."

"And I thought this was a Christian woman!" exclaimed Mrs. Newman, holding up her hands. "How we are deceived in this world."

"Yes, madam," returned Agnes, coldly, "it is only in the next world that a true judgment will be arrived at, and even then we shall not be the judges."

If Mr. Richard Crawford had been occupying his usual post (which he was not) half way up the hill, or even higher, he could not have failed to hear Mrs. Newman's sniff; it was like a hippopotamus who has just emerged from under water.

"Perhaps you think the infidel is only to

be *pitied*, young lady," observed she, with what, had she been an irreligious person, would certainly have been termed a sneer. "Now pity, we all know, is akin to love."

"Mrs. Newman!"

"Yes; I can read it in your face. You love this man. You would marry him if he asked you to do so."

"That is false, madam, and I think you know it."

Notwithstanding this unpleasant imputation, Mrs. Newman was pleased. The girl was on her part evidently speaking truth. No irretrievable mischief had as yet been done. If he had proposed, she had not accepted him, although perhaps she might not have rejected him.

"I would never marry any man," she went on, "with the opinions you have, however uncharitably, described."

"But you are not without hope that his opinions may change," observed Mrs. Newman, quickly. "You believe in this man's possible conversion. Perhaps you believe that you yourself may be the happy instrument. You do; I see you do."

"If you have no other purpose in coming here than to insult me thus, Mrs. Newman," returned Agnes, trembling, "I will retire." Her courage, so high when it was *he* who was attacked, sank before these relentless blows aimed at herself alone.

"Not before I have told you the whole truth," exclaimed the other, stepping swiftly towards her, and grasping her by the wrist. "Your conscience whispers that you are looking beyond the convert for the lover. If you have hitherto deceived yourself, you can do so no longer now, for I have undeceived you."

"And you do not wish your brother to be converted?"

"By *you*, no," answered Mrs. Newman, fiercely; "that is," added she, recollecting herself, "because such a thing is out of your power; you do not know how strong he is—this man. It is you who would be perverted by him. Two precious souls lost in the endeavour to save one."

"He did not think of his own life when he spurred across the whirling river to rescue mine," murmured Agnes, as though to herself.

"A reckless man will do anything for a pretty face, girl."

"You hurt my wrist, madam; please to let me go. A reckless man! A brave and noble man, I say, and one to be of the same blood with whom should make you proud."

"Those are strong words, young lady, and scarcely modest ones. If I must needs be

proud of being this man's sister, how fine a thing it would be to be his wife. And it *would* be a fine thing to some people."

Up till now, Mrs. Newman had preserved the habitual smile and gentle tones that had stood her in such good stead through years of vulgar and penurious greed, but at these words her look and manner became those of a shrew.

"For a girl, for instance," she went on, "without money, without family—springing, in fact, from no one knows whom or whence, it doubtless would be a great matter to secure John Carlyon for a husband; that is to say, if she had no religious principles whatever, and was only bent upon attaining a position for herself in this world. But for you, Miss Crawford, no matter what the advantage you might gain by such a marriage, I will take leave to tell you——"

"Nothing more, madam," interposed Agnes, with dignity, at the same time ringing the bell sharply for her visitor's carriage. "I will not listen to another word. You have said enough already, far more than any gentlewoman ought to say. Any honour to be gained by alliance with one of your family would indeed be dearly purchased if it entailed intimacy with such as you."

Mrs. Newman curtsied deeply, with her customary grace.

"Thank you, Miss Crawford," said she. "I have also to be grateful to you——" here the servant entered and received his orders, retiring, doubtless, with the impression that the two ladies were most uncommonly polite to one another,—"for having exhibited to me, under the disguise of a Christian young person, an unprincipled girl, and a designing fortune-hunter."

"She never can see him again after *that*," murmured Mrs. Newman, as, leaning back in her pony carriage, she thought over that heavy chainshot delivered at parting. "It was absolutely necessary that I should not mince matters; and what a comfort it is to think that I have acted for the girl's own good!"

CHAPTER XVI.

SENTENCE OF DEATH.

It was on the morning after the interview between Mrs. Newman and Agnes that Mr. Carstairs, calling, as he often did, at Woodlees, was, for the first time, so fortunate as to find its proprietor at home.

"Mr. John is in to-day, sir," said old Robin, whose eye-twinkling upon this subject had become chronic; "he really is, for once."

"Oh," ejaculated the doctor, by no means with satisfaction, but rather like one who, having received certain information that his dentist is out of town, has gone to consult him respecting a troublesome tooth, and finds

him *in*. "Not gone to Greycrags this morning, then, eh, Robin?"

"No, sir, but he's got a letter from the young lady. Leastways, one was brought to him five minutes ago, and if you had seen his face when he took it into his hand—oh, yes, we was right about that, bless you. 'There was no answer,' said the man as brought it over. Why, of course not; what's the need of answering by letter when my gentleman rides over every mortal day? Perhaps he's put off a bit, that's all."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Carstairs, musing.

"I tell you what, sir," went on the garrulous old man, "it will be a sore day for Miss Meg as was when the young squire marries. She counted upon Woodlees for Master Jedediah, bless you. But it's better as it is, to my thinking; for Miss Agnes, she'll win Mr. John to what's right, to the path as my

old master walked in all the days of his life—a good man, Mr. Carstairs, if ever there was one—and that is all as is really wanting. If he had but piety and propriety, as our gardener says (and a remarkable long head has gardener), he would be perfect; and though I think it my duty not to let him know it, this I will say, never had servants a better master, or a kinder, than Mr. John. Whereas, you know, Miss Meg as was, she was always near—very pious and very proper, but most audacious near. Why, I remember, as if it was yesterday, when our Susan (she as was married to him as kep the Disney Arms, and a sad drunkard *he* was, but they're both gone now) went out to wash some chitterlings in the mill-race yonder and fell in. That was just after missis died, and Miss Meg she managed the house, and pretty nigh starved us for a matter of six months; we had to eat

the innerds of everything, such as we had been used to throw away before her time, and she set us an example by having chitterlings for breakfast; nasty stinking things as ever you smelt. Well, Susan fell in, and the news came to the kitchen just as I was bringing in the urn, and I told Miss Meg at the breakfast table. 'Ma'am,' says I, 'while cleaning them innerds Susan Grives have tumbled into the mill-race.' '*Where are the innerds?*' cried Miss Meg. I never shall forget it, never. Without even asking whether the girl were drowned or not, '*Where* are the innerds?' Oh, yes, I do hope that Miss Meg as was will not be mistress here in my time."

"Well, that's not very likely, Robin, is it?" inquired the doctor, looking earnestly in the old man's face. "You surely do not expect at your age to outlive your master."

"At *my* age," grumbled Robin; "well, I'm sure, one would think I was Methuselah. And as to that, the young are taken, and the old ones left, oftentimes."

"Very true, Robin," answered Mr. Carstairs, nodding. "And now let me see Mr. John. I know my way, and needn't trouble you to come up-stairs."

"Ah, but he ain't in the turret room," ejaculated the other, still in rather a dissatisfied tone, for Robin was tender as a belle of eight-and-twenty upon the point of age, "he's in the master's room. He happened to be in the hall when the letter came, and just as though he couldn't wait for a minute, he shut hisself in there to read it, and ain't been out since! I daresay he's getting it by heart," chuckled the old man. "You must knock louder than that, bless ye——"

But Mr. Carstairs, getting no reply to his

summons, and finding the door made fast, stooped down and looked through the key-hole. "Fetch some cold water," cried he; "quick, quick!" and while uttering the words, the agile little man flew out at the garden door, and in at the window of the cedar chamber (standing open as usual to get what sunshine it could) like a bird. There was, indeed, not a moment to spare. John Carlyon lay upon the floor, still breathing stertorously, but with a face like that of a strangled man. His head had fortunately been caught by the sofa cushion, and remained higher than the rest of his body. His hand still clutched an open letter, the receipt of which had doubtless caused the calamity by some emotional shock, and a small book—it looked like a Testament—lay on the floor by his side. The doctor's quick eye took in all these things at a single glance, and

sooner than the action could be described in words, he had freed Carlyon's throat from neckcloth and collar, and bared his arm. Then, throwing open the door to get a free current of air, as well as to admit Robin, he began to use the lancet. Would the blood never flow? Was he dead—this strong man, in the full vigour of his prime? No; very slowly, drop by drop, but presently in a crimson tide, came the life stream! while old Robin stood by, dazed with terror, and sprinkling the cold water as often on the floor as upon his young master's forehead.

"Is it a fit, doctor?" inquired he, in a hoarse whisper.

"No, the heat of the weather, that's all," responded Mr. Carstairs, hastily. "See, he is getting better now."

There was a deep-drawn respiration, and the large eyes drowsily opened and closed.

"You had better go away, Robin; he is coming to himself, and perhaps would not like to know that you had seen him in this state. Say nothing to anyone of what has happened. Hush! go, go."

"Ay, ay, sir, I understand," answered the old man, moving reluctantly away. "It is not for me to tittle-tattle about my master's affairs." Then, as the door was pushed hastily behind him, he added, "But I knows a fit from a faint, I reckon. God forbid that Miss Meg as was *should* be mistress here in *my* time, as I was just saying; yet many's the true word spoken in jest. And he did look mortal bad, sure*ly*."

"What is the matter?" asked Carlyon, sitting up, and passing his hand wearily across his forehead, "Have I been ill, doctor?"

"Yes, my friend, very ill; but you are

getting over it now. Let me help you on to the sofa; there."

"The letter! Where is it?" inquired Carlyon, feebly.

"It is here," said the other, returning it to him, folded up.

"You have read it, doctor?"

"Yes; I could not help reading it—that is, seeing that one word."

"Ay."

The voice that was wont to be so strong and cheery sounded faint and hollow like the last boom of a funeral bell.

"Only one word, doctor, yet with a world of meaning in it. That 'No,' means for me No happiness, No hope. I wish you had not come and saved my life. What years of wretchedness may be before me ere I gain the shelter of the grave!"

"No, Carlyon," returned the doctor, gravely,

"you have at least not that to fear. You will never be a long-lived man."

"How so?" inquired the other, incredulously. "I should be glad to be able to believe you; for somehow," glancing up at the strange weapons upon the wall, "I could never bring myself to hasten matters—to desert my post here, albeit I have nothing to guard, nothing to protect——"

Carlyon did not finish the sentence, but turned round with his face to the wall.

"That letter was from Miss Crawford, was it not?" said the doctor, very tenderly; "and its meaning is that she has refused you. I am deeply sorry, old friend, that you have been caused this pain, and I reproach myself because it was in my power to avert it."

"In yours?"

"Yes. If I had done my duty, I should

have told you something weeks ago which would have spared you much of this. Can you bear to hear it now?"

"I can bear anything," murmured Carlyon, wearily, "the worst that can befall has happened to me already. She is not like other girls; when she says No, she means it."

The despairing words had no such hopeless ring but that the other knew an answer was expected with some comfort in it. Yet none was given.

"Carlyon," said he, after a long silence, "if Agnes Crawford had written 'Yes,' instead of 'No,' still knowing what I know, learning what it would have been my duty to tell her, she would not have married you. And you, if you had known, you would not have asked her to become your wife."

"Would I not?" murmured Carlyon, bitterly. "Your secret must indeed then be a

terrible one. Perhaps I have madness in my blood. I sometimes think I have."

"No. It is not terrible—at least, it need not be so—but only sad. Had it been what you hint at, I should have known it years ago, but this I only learnt a few weeks back —on the day when you saved Miss Crawford's life upon the sands."

"I wish I had been drowned in saving it."

"You were very nearly drowned, Carlyon. It was only your fainting under water that saved you. Your case, I saw at once, was different from the other two; and when you lay insensible at my house, I found out this—you have heart disease, John Carlyon. You nearly died to-day; you may die to-morrow if anything should cause you the least excitement. Your life is not worth six months' purchase. I do not think it possible that you will live beyond a year." There was a solemn

pause, during which the lightest sound was heard; a butterfly brushed against the open window; a bee buried in some fragrant flower beneath its sill, emitted a muffled hum; far off, on the other side of the high garden-wall, the mill-race roared; the rooks cawed sleepily from the elm tops in the park.

"You remember, upon the day I mention," continued the doctor, "that I began to speak upon religious matters. Doubtless it seemed impertinent to you that I did so; but you know the reason why. I thought—do not let us argue any more, my friend—I thought it my duty to do so, and I think so now. Science had passed your sentence of death, and it was surely meet that Religion should comfort you. I saw that I was unfit for such a task, and yet I wished to be of some service to the son of your father. There, I will not speak of him again, since it pains you. But I have known

you from a child, my friend, and I knew your dear mother, who gazes upon you from yonder picture, with the same love and with the same fear, (I did not understand it then, but I do now,) with which I have seen her gaze upon her darling boy a hundred times."

"You understand it now?" said Carlyon, bitterly; "oh, no."

"I think I do," returned Mr. Carstairs, quietly.

Still keeping his face averted, Carlyon held out his hand, which the other took tenderly within his own.

"And why did you not tell me this—I mean about my heart—before, doctor?"

"Partly, lest the shock might hurt you at that time, which, from something that you yourself let fall, I thought it would; partly because I was a coward, and loth to be the bearer of such news; but principally, because

I thought I saw in Miss Agnes one who would show you the road to heaven far better than I. I knew, of course, after what had happened, that you two must needs become intimate, but I did not look forward to your —to this sad end of it all. Even that, however, lies in some measure at my door. I did all for the best, and nothing has turned out as I would have had it."

"Don't fret, my friend; don't reproach yourself, you good soul," said Carlyon, turning round and smiling upon the doctor, who stood dejected by his side. "It was not certainly your fault that I shut my eyes to the gulf that lay between me and Agnes. I am punished for my folly, that is all."

"It was I, however," pursued the doctor, mournfully, "who gave you at least one opportunity which has doubtless worked with others to this sad end. I knew that that

hare-brained cousin of hers would be jealous of you. He suspects everybody. I believe he is jealous of *me*, the self-willed idiot!—and so, when we were at Greycrags that night, I kept him to myself, solely that Miss Agnes might have some serious talk with you. I was an ass not to foresee what sort of talk it would be. I would have told her the whole truth, but that that would have been the betrayal of a professional secret. Now, if I had been a parson I should have done so for the good of your soul."

"Lost! lost! for ever lost!" murmured Carlyon.

"No, no, my friend, not lost," returned the doctor, kindly. "It is never too late to—entertain more correct views upon religious matters."

"What are you talking about, man?" exclaimed Carlyon, fiercely. "I was not thinking of my 'miserable soul,' as you call it."

"I am sorry to hear it," returned the doctor, simply.

"And I am not going to join your fire insurance society," added the other, scornfully. "The premium would, under the circumstances, be probably enormous."

"I have said what I thought it was my duty as a Christian man to say," said Mr. Carstairs, reddening, "and now I am here in my professional capacity only. Can I do anything more for you, Mr. Carlyon?"

"Yes. That instrument which I see peeping out of your pocket is the stethoscope, is it not? Please to use it once more."

"I have told you what its answer will be," said the doctor, hesitating.

"Nevertheless," replied the other, smiling, "I wish to make 'siccar,' as Kirkpatrick said when he drove his dirk into the Red Comyn."

He opened his waistcoat himself, and

watched Mr. Carstairs steadily as he applied the instrument.

"When I was on the grand jury at Lancaster last year, doctor, I saw a sad scene. A mother waiting for the verdict upon her son, who was being tried for murder, and had been caught red-handed in the very act. I am glad to think that when you pronounce *my* doom there will be none to lament for *me*, not one. Come, doctor, what is it? I know you are a wise man, who looks upon the bright side of things, and yet has the knack of telling the truth. You are putting your black cap on, I see. The sentence is Death, is it?"

The kind-hearted doctor nodded. Perhaps he did not like to trust himself to speak.

"Good. And the stethoscope never deceives?"

"Never," returned Mr. Carstairs, firmly,

and with some approach to indignation. "I will stake my professional reputation upon what I have stated with respect to your case."

Carlyon smiled in his old, pleasant fashion.

"I would not damage your credit, doctor, by overliving my year, for all the world. And I may die in the meantime, of course?"

"At any moment. To-day—to-morrow. It is certainly your duty to lose no time in setting your affairs in order. I think you should see your sister, Mr. Carlyon. I met her only yesterday afternoon, and she spoke most kindly of you."

"Most kindly of *me?* Then she must certainly have been speaking very ill of me to somebody else. I have always observed that in Meg. After administering a great deal of scourge she sometimes applies a little balsam."

"You are uncharitable, Carlyon. She not only spoke quite enthusiastically of your heroism upon the sands the other day, but also very patronisingly (you know her way,) about Miss Agnes, whom she had just been to see at Greycrags. Why, what's the matter? Excitement of this sort is the very worst thing——"

"Did my sister go to Greycrags?" exclaimed Carlyon, starting to his feet. "Did that lying woman speak to Agnes? It is she then whom I have to thank for this—this letter. I see it all now. She did not wish me to marry, lest Woodlees should not revert to her Jedediah; and to stop it, she maligns me to Agnes. The hypocrite, the backbiter!"

"You are killing yourself, Mr. Carlyon."

"You are right; I will be very careful," returned the other, bitterly, and pacing the room with hasty strides. "I should be sorry

to die within the next few days. Perhaps you will call to-morrow, and see how I am."

Carlyon took the little man by the arm and gently, but firmly, urged him towards the door.

"It is no use my coming to see you, sir," expostulated the doctor; "I can do nothing for you."

"Very well, then, don't come," returned the other, quietly. "I shall remember you all the same, as if you did."

"Sir!" ejaculated Mr. Carstairs.

"Forgive me, old friend; I am not myself. I do not know what I am saying. I thank you for all your kindness, and especially for your telling me the truth."

Doctor and patient shook hands warmly enough. Although widely different, each respected the other after his fashion.

"For God's sake keep yourself quiet," was

the kindly and characteristic remark of the former, as he rode away.

Carlyon nodded, then turned to Robin.

"Tell James to saddle Red Berild directly, and then come to me."

"Red Berild, Mr. John?" returned the old man, scarcely believing his ears, for it was rarely that anyone ever crossed that horse except his master.

"Did not I say so?" observed Carlyon, coolly, and, returning to the parlour, sat himself down to write. The note was finished before the groom came, and he began to fret and fume.

"You have been a long time coming, sir," said he, with unwonted sternness; "and Red Berild must make up for your delay. Do not spare the spur. I want this letter taken to Burnthorp, to Mr. Scrivens."

"The lawyer, sir?"

"Yes, the lawyer; who else? There is no answer; but he or his partner is to come at once. If the means of conveyance are wanted, lend him your horse, and you will walk."

"It is twenty miles," murmured the groom, thinking of the distance to be traversed by Shanks, his (unaccustomed) mare.

"I shall expect him here in four hours," observed Carlyon, referring to his watch instead of to this remonstrance.

When sentence of death is pronounced by one's doctor, we think—that is, just at first—that it is going to be executed forthwith; and we are in a particular hurry to make our wills.

END OF VOL. I.

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